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RUSSIA
IN CENTRAL ASIA

RUSSIA IN CENTRAL ASIA

IN 1889

AND THE

ANGLO-RUSSIAN QUESTION

BY THE

HON. GEORGE N. CURZON, M.P.

FELLOW OF ALL SOULS COLLEGE, OXFORD

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With Appendices, Maps, Illustrations, and an Index

'Upon the Russian frontier, where
The watchers of two armies stand
Near one another'

MATTHEW ARNOLD
The Sick King in Bokhara

EE-i-96

B2258

SECOND EDITION

EE. i. 76.

LONDON
LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
AND NEW YORK: 15 EAST 16th STREET
1889

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TO THE GREAT ARMY OF

RUSSOPHOBES WHO MISLEAD OTHERS, AND

RUSSOPHILES WHOM OTHERS MISLEAD

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

WHICH WILL BE FOUND EQUALLY DISRESPECTFUL

TO THE IGNOBLE TERRORS OF THE ONE

AND THE PERVERSE COMPLACENCY OF THE OTHERS

PREFACE

THE nucleus of this book—less than one-third of its present dimensions—appeared in the shape of a series of articles, entitled 'Russia in Central Asia,' which I contributed to the 'Manchester Courier' and other leading English provincial newspapers, in the months of November and December 1888, and January 1889. These articles were descriptive of a journey which I had taken in the months of September and October 1888, along the newly-constructed Transcaspian Railway, through certain of the Central Asian dominions of the Czar of Russia. Exigencies of space, however, and the limitations of journalistic propriety, prevented me from including in my letters a good deal of information which I had obtained; and were, of course, fatal to the incorporation with the narrative of illustrations or maps. Written, too, at a distance from works of reference, and depending in some cases upon testimony which I had no opportunity to verify or support, my former articles contained errors which I have since been

able to correct. These considerations, and the desire to place before the public in a more coherent and easily accessible shape the latest information about the interesting regions which I traversed, have encouraged me almost entirely to rewrite, and to publish in a more careful and extended form, my somewhat fragmentary original contributions, to which in the interval I have also been enabled to add a mass of entirely new material. If the impress of their early character be in places at all perceptibly retained, it is because I am strongly of opinion that in descriptions of travel first thoughts are apt to be the best, and have consequently sometimes shrunk from depriving my narrative of such vividness or colour as it may have gained from being originally written upon the spot. References, figures, and statistics, I have subjected to verification; while such sources of contemporary history as relate to my subject I have diligently explored. In the absence of any Russian publications corresponding to the Blue Books and voluminous reports of the English Government Departments, it is extremely difficult to acquire full or precise information about Russian affairs. But such sources as were open to me in newspapers, articles, &c., I have industriously studied. I trust, therefore, that substantial accuracy may be predicated of these pages; for, in a case where the inferences to be drawn are both of high political significance, and are absolutely dependent upon the correct statement of facts, I should hold it a crime to deceive.

A few words of explanation as to what these chapters do, and what they do not, profess to be. Their pretensions are of no very exalted order. They are, in the main, a record of a journey, taken under circumstances of exceptional advantage and ease, through a country, the interest of which to English readers consists no longer in its physical remoteness and impenetrability, but rather in the fact that those conditions have just been superseded by a new order of things, capable at any moment of bringing it under the stern and immediate notice of Englishmen, as the theatre of imperial diplomacy; possibly—*quod di avertant omen*—as the threshold of international war. Travel nowadays, at least in parts to which the railway has penetrated, is unattended with risk and is relatively shorn of adventure—a decadence which separates my story by a wide gulf of division from that of earlier visitors to the Transcaspian regions. These pursued their explorations slowly and laboriously, either in disguise or armed to the teeth, amid suspicious and fanatical peoples, over burning deserts and through intolerable sands. The later traveller, as he follows in comparative comfort the route of which they were the suffering pioneers, may at once admire their heroism and profit by their experience. With such forerunners, therefore, I do not presume to enter into the most remote competition.

Nor, again, can I emulate the credentials of others, who, without necessarily having visited the country itself, have yet, assisted by an intimate acquaintance

with the Russian language, devoted years of patient application to the problems which it unfolds, and, as in the case of Mr. Demetrius Boulger and Mr. Charles Marvin in particular, have produced many valuable works for the instruction of their fellow-countrymen. I did not, however, start upon my journey without having made myself thoroughly acquainted with their opinions and researches; nor have these pages been written without subsequent study of every available authority. The one distinguishing merit that I can fearlessly claim for them is that of posteriority in point of time. No work in the English language has appeared on this branch of the Central Asian Question for five years; and those five years have marked an incalculable advance in the character and dimensions of the problem. With unimpeachable truth Skobeleff once wrote in a letter: 'In Central Asia the position of affairs changes not every hour, but every minute. Therefore I say, Vigilance, vigilance, vigilance.' The title of my book, 'Russia in Central Asia in 1889,' will sufficiently indicate my desire that it should be interpreted as an account of the *status quo* brought up to date—*i.e.* to the autumn of the year 1889.

One other claim I make for these pages—viz. that they approach a problem, which in its reference to Englishmen is almost exclusively political, from a political point of view. Central Asia has its charms for the historian, the archæologist, the artist, the man of science, the *dilettante* traveller, for every class, indeed,

from the erudite to the idle. A wide field of research and a plentiful return await the explorer in each of these fields. Although I have not been entirely forgetful of their interests, and although references to these subjects will be found dispersed throughout the volume, I have preferred in the main to concentrate my attention upon such points as will appeal to those who, whether as actors or as spectators of public affairs, feel a concern in the foreign policy of the Empire. Earlier travellers, such as the Hungarian Vambéry, the American Schuyler, the French Bonvalot, the Swiss Moser, the English Lansdell, have devoted themselves more closely to the customs, habits, and character of the natives—to what I may call the local colouring of the Central Asian picture. In these respects I have not aspired to follow in their footsteps. It is not my aim to produce a magnified Bædeker's Handbook to Transcaspia. I assume a certain foreknowledge on the part of my readers with the chronology of Russian advance, and with the nature of the conquered regions; and I endeavour only to place clearly before them the present situation of affairs as modified, if not revolutionised, by the construction of the Transcaspian Railway; and so to enable them to form a dispassionate judgment upon the achievements, policy, and objects of Russia, as well as upon the becoming attitude and consequent responsibilities of England.

In the three concluding chapters I enter upon a wider field and discuss the present aspect of the Central Asian problem—a question which no writer should

approach without a consciousness of its magnitude, or venture to decide without long previous study.

In the interest of would-be travellers—speaking of Central Asia one may still decline to use the word tourist—I would say in passing, that if they are fortunate enough to obtain leave from St. Petersburg (no merely formal undertaking, as the sequel will show), they will do wisely to make the journey as soon as they can. Let them not be deterred by exaggerated accounts of the inhospitality of the region, or the hardships of the road. There is enough to repay them for any personal inconvenience or material discomfort. The present is a moment of unique, because transitory, interest in the life of the Oriental countries through which the railway leads. It is the blank leaf between the pages of an old and a new dispensation; the brief interval separating a compact and immemorial tradition from the rude shock and unfeeling Philistinism of nineteenth-century civilisation. The era of the Thousand and One Nights, with its strange mixture of savagery and splendour, of coma and excitement, is fast fading away, and will soon have yielded up all its secrets to science. Here, in the cities of Alp Arslan, and Timur, and Abdullah Khan, may be seen the sole remaining stage upon which is yet being enacted that expiring drama of realistic romance.

I must acknowledge a weight of obligation in many quarters.

To the Royal Geographical Society I am particularly

indebted for the permission to reprint many of the details, contained in a paper on the Transcaspian Railway, which I read before that body in March last, and which is published in their Proceedings for May; and, still more, for the loan of the map of Central Asia, executed under their instructions from the latest information supplied by travellers, as well as from English and Russian official maps. For the frontier lines, as delineated therein, I am responsible; but I believe them to be absolutely correct. M. Lessar, now Russian Consul-General at Liverpool, and formerly political *attaché* to the Russian Staff on the Afghan Boundary Commission, has placed me under a great obligation by the loan of several of the photographs, which have been reproduced in this volume; and by the kindness which induced him to peruse my original articles, and to supply me with the means of correcting sundry errors, as well as of amplifying the information, which they contained.

For the remainder of the illustrations I am indebted to the courtesy of Major C. E. Yate, C.S.I., C.M.G., recently one of the English Boundary Commissioners in Afghanistan; of Mr. Charles Marvin, who lent me some illustrations from Russian newspapers, drawn by the clever pencil of the Russian artist Karazin; and of private friends. Of the whole of them I may say that, to the best of my knowledge, they are new to English readers, and have not previously appeared in any English work, or, in fact, in any work at all.

I must also thank the Editor of the 'Fortnightly Review' for permission to re-avail myself of some of the material contained in an article upon Bokhara, which I contributed to that magazine in January 1889.

In the appendix I have included some directions for travellers; a table of distances in Central Asia; a chronological table, drawn up by myself, of British and Russian movements in Central Asia in this century, which may help to elucidate the narrative; and a Bibliography, which, without pretending to be exhaustive, claims to include the principal works to which a student will find it necessary to have recourse in following the history of British or Russian advance in Persia, Afghanistan, Turkestan, and Transcaspia, and in acquiring some familiarity with the history of those countries. I have compiled it with great care, and with much labour, seeing that many of the titles are included in no extant collection.

Finally, let me say that I shall welcome with gratitude any corrections that, in the event of a later edition, or of further publication upon the same subject, may redeem error or impart greater accuracy.

GEORGE N. CURZON.

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MEMORANDA

The dates in this book are reckoned by the English Calendar, or New style, being twelve days in advance of the Greek and Russian Calendar, or Old style. The rouble is computed as equivalent to two shillings in English money. One verst = $\frac{2}{3}$ mile. One poud (weight) = 36 English lbs.

RUSSIA IN CENTRAL ASIA

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

'No pleasure is comparable to the standing upon the vantage-ground of Truth.'—BACON. *Essay I. Of Truth.*

Russian railways to the Caspian—Proposed Vladikavkas-Petrovsk line—Caucasus tunnel—Length of journey—Previous travel in Central Asia—Foreign travellers on the Transcaspian Railway—Previous writers on the Transcaspian Railway—Justification for a new work—Varied interest of Central Asia—Political interest—Russian designs upon India—The Frontier Question.

Russian railways to the Caspian

I PROPOSE in this book to narrate the impressions derived from a journey along the newly-completed Russian line of railway from the Caspian to Samarkand. On May 27, 1888, although the line was still in a backward condition, and could not certainly be described as available for general traffic, the long-expected ceremonial of opening took place; and the name of General Annenkoff was flashed to all quarters of the globe as that of the man who had successfully accomplished a feat till lately declared to be impossible, and had linked by an unbroken chain of steam

locomotion the capital of Peter the Great with the capital of Tamerlane. Along the most direct route from St. Petersburg to the terminus at Samarkand there exist now only two breaks to the through communication by rail, viz. the 135 miles of mountain road between Vladikavkas on the northern spurs of the Caucasus and Tiflis on the south, and the passage of the Caspian.

Proposed Vladikavkas-Petrovsk Line

The former, it is said, will soon be obviated by a railway, for which plans and surveys have already been made, and which the Russian Government has been strongly petitioned to construct, from Vladikavkas to Petrovsk on the Caspian, a distance of 165 miles. The cost of this branch has been estimated at an average of 10,000*l.* a mile. From Petrovsk the line would be continued south along the western shore of the Caspian to Derbent and Baku, at an additional cost of 500,000*l.* Such a line, apart from its military advantages, might acquire great commercial importance, as affording an easy and uninterrupted entry into European Russia from the Caspian, the port of Petrovsk being open to navigation all the year round, while the Volga is closed by ice in the winter. It is a project which we may therefore expect to see carried out before long.

Caucasus Tunnel

It has also been proposed, as an alternative, to drive the railroad by a tunnel through the heart of the main Caucasian range, from Vladikavkas, or a point west of Vladikavkas on the northern, to Gori on the southern side, where it would join the Batoum-Tiflis line, the total distance from point to point being

110 miles. Shorter and more expeditious as this route would be, it would involve long and laborious tunnelling, as well as a prodigious outlay, the official estimate being over 30,000*l.* a mile. It is accordingly extremely improbable that it will, for some time at any rate, be taken in hand. In any case, while either line remains unlaid, and the Kazbek range continues, as now, to be traversable by road alone, a supplementary steam route is provided by the Black Sea Service from Odessa or Sebastopol to Batoum, whence the railroad runs direct to Baku on the Caspian.

The second interruption which I named to the through transit by rail from the western to the eastern terminus, viz. the Caspian, involves marine transport, and a short sea crossing of nineteen, which might easily be reduced to fifteen or sixteen, hours.

Length of journey

Even under the present conditions, which in themselves are far from developed, the journey from St. Petersburg to Samarkand can be accomplished in ten or eleven days, and with a more apt correspondence of trains and steamers might easily be accelerated. When one or other of the afore-mentioned schemes has been carried into effect, two days at least may be struck off this total.

Previous travel in Central Asia

Prior to the construction of this railway the opportunities enjoyed by Englishmen of visiting the region which it now lays open had been few and far between. Since the intrepid Dr. Wolff penetrated at the risk of his life to Bokhara in 1843, to clear up the fate of Stoddart and Conolly in the preceding year, there was no English visitor to the city of the

Amir till the so-called missionary, Dr. Lansdell, in 1882. Similarly, before the publication of the latter's book, we owed in the main such descriptions as we have in our own language of Samarkand to the pen of a Hungarian in the person of Professor Vambéry, and of an American in that of Mr. Schuyler. As regards other parts of the till now forbidden region, Merv, though visited by Burnes, Abbott, Shakespear, Thomson, and Wolff between 1832 and 1844, relapsed after that date into obscurity, and was little more than a mysterious name to most Englishmen till the adventurous exploit of O'Donovan in 1881; and it is difficult to realise that a place which less than a decade ago was pronounced to be the key of the Indian Empire is now an inferior wayside station on a Russian line of rail. Such efforts as were made at different times by independent British officers, often in disguise and at the peril of their lives, to explore the *terra incognita* on the borders of Persia and Afghanistan, were sedulously discouraged by the Home or Indian Government, in nervous deference to Muscovite sensitiveness, ever ready to take umbrage at an activity displayed by others which it has ostentatiously incited in its own pioneers. Colonel Valentine Baker recalled from the Atrek region in 1873, Captain Burnaby from Khiva in 1875, Colonel MacGregor from Meshed in 1875, and Colonel Stewart from Persia in 1881, all attest the mistaken policy of abandoned opportunities, and the tactical blunder of allowing a rival mariner to steal your wind.

Although the almost insuperable difficulties

hitherto connected with travel in these parts have now disappeared, it cannot be said that all impediments to the journey have ceased to exist; while, even if they had, the necessary resources of exploration are not such as any but a few individuals will in all probability possess. The Russian Government, which has always looked with extreme irritation upon the intrusion of Englishmen into its Asiatic territories, is not likely to have been converted off-hand by the cosmopolitan professions of General Annenkoff, and can hardly be suspected of such gratuitous unselfishness as to be willing to turn a purely military line, constructed for strategical purposes of its own, into a highway for the nations. In the first flush of triumphant pride at the completion of the undertaking, foreign journalists were, it was asserted, freely invited to take part in the inaugural ceremonies. But when the complimentary party assembled at Baku, it was found to consist, in addition to the relatives of General Annenkoff, of Frenchmen alone, who with one accord made to their host the becoming return of impassioned eulogies in the columns of the Parisian press, which in the summer of last year blossomed with the record of their festive proceedings. Frenchmen have indeed for some time, owing to political considerations, been in high favour in Russia, and have long found in their nationality an *open sesame* to the Russian dominions in the east. Some of the best and most recent books of travel about Turkomania and Turkestan, in a language intelligible to the average Englishman, have been by French writers,

Foreign travellers on the Transcaspian Railway

who may always, when treating of Russian affairs, be trusted to be enthusiastic and entertaining, even though seldom profound. The 'Times' correspondent at St. Petersburg received an invitation to join the same company; but owing to a difficulty in procuring the requisite official permission, found himself a few days in arrear of the party, and the line in a state of disorganisation bordering on collapse, consequent upon a strain to which in those early days it was as yet unaccustomed. I had the good fortune to be a member of the next foreign party that travelled over the line, the origin of our enterprise being an agreement which was reported to have been entered into between General Annenkoff and the Compagnie Internationale des Wagon-Lits in Paris, and an intimation of which was published in the newspapers in the summer of 1888. No very precise intelligence about the nature of this agreement was forthcoming; but upon the strength of its announcement would-be visitors to Merv and Samarkand were understood to be converging upon Tiflis shortly before the time when I left England in the first days of September 1888.

Previous writers on the Trans caspian Railway

No English newspaper published a detailed account of the new railway except the 'Times'; but the interesting letters of its correspondent, Mr. Dobson, which appeared between the months of August and October 1888 inclusive, written as they were from the point of view of a tourist narrating his personal experiences rather than of a politician endeavouring to form some estimate of the situation, left an unoccu-

pied field for later travellers with a more ambitious aim. Two short papers on the Transcaspian Railway appeared in the 'Pall Mall Gazette' in the month of May 1888, written by the editor of that journal from St. Petersburg. Chapters and pamphlets on the railway in its earlier stages are to be found among the works of Mr. Charles Marvin.[1] Major C. E. Yate, who travelled over the line, while part of it was yet in process of construction, from Tcharjui to the Caspian in February 1888, on his return from the Afghan Boundary Commission, appended a chapter on his experiences to his excellent book entitled 'Northern Afghanistan.' Professor Vambéry also contributed an article to an English magazine on the subject in 1887.[2] An abridged translation of a Russian pamphlet on the railway has recently appeared in India from the pen of Colonel W. E. Gowan.[3] To the best of my knowledge these are the only descriptions published in the English language of General Annenkoff's scheme; and of their number not one, with the exception of the 'Times' letters, has been penned since its completion. In the French tongue, as I have indicated, there has been a more luxuriant crop of descriptive literature. One special correspondent has since given to the world a substantial volume, the quality of which may be fairly inferred from the fact that out of 466 pages in the entire work, he does not land his readers at Uzun Ada, the starting point of the railway, till the

[1] Vide the Bibliography at the end of this volume.

[2] *Fortnightly Review*, February 1887.

[3] *The Transcaspian Railway, its meaning and its future.* Translated and condensed from the Russian of I. Y. Vatslik.

185th page, or start them on his journey from there till page 307.[1] Another correspondent sent a batch of singularly flimsy letters to the 'Temps.' A third, with far superior literary pretensions, the Vicomte Emile de Vogüé, a French Academician and brother-in-law of General Annenkoff, published his own experiences in the 'Journal des Débats.' But his articles, though characterised by an agreeable fancy and by all the picturesqueness of the Gallic idiom, added nothing to our previous stock of knowledge on the subject. A young French officer, the Comte de Cholet, who travelled over the line in 1888, and in the disguise of a Cossack officer, accompanied Alikhanoff, the Governor of Merv, upon an interesting tour of inspection along the Afghan frontier, has lately written a book, which, though it repays perusal, is devoted to his personal adventures rather than to popular instruction.[2]

Justification for a new work

A later writer may find some excuse, therefore for gleaning in a field from which so scanty a harvest has already been garnered; and although the ground which he traverses will be to some extent familiar to the more advanced students of Central Asian politics and topography, there will be many who have not access to the proceedings of Geographical Societies, or who have not explored the writings of specialists, to whose concern he may justifiably appeal.

[1] *En Asie Centrale à la Vapeur.* Par Napoléon Ney. Paris. 1888.

[2] *Excursion en Turkestan et sur la Frontière Russo-Afghane.* Par Lieut. le Comte de Cholet. Paris. 1889.

Varied interest of Central Asia

It is scarcely possible indeed to imagine a region of the world at all accessible that opens out so wide and manifold a horizon of interest. The traveller who has made a periplus of the universe, and, like Ulysses,

> Much has seen and known; cities of men
> And manners, climates, councils, governments,

may yet confess to a novel excitement as he threads the bazaars of remote Bokhara, or gazes on the coronation stone and sepulchre of Timur at Samarkand. He will not look for the first time without emotion on the waters of the Oxus, that famous river that, like the Euphrates and the Ganges, rolls its stately burden down from a hoar antiquity through the legends and annals of the East. In the Turkoman of the desert, and the turbaned Tartar of the Khanates, he will see an original and a striking type of humanity. Something too of marvel, if not much of beauty, must there be in a country which presents to the eye a succession of bewildering contrasts; where, in fine vicissitude, grandeur alternates with sadness; where the scarp of precipitous mountains frowns over an unending plain; where spots of verdure lie strewn like islets amid shoreless seas of sand; where mighty rivers perish in marsh and swamp; where populous cities are succeeded as a site of residence by tents of felt, and sedentary toil as a mode of life by the vagrant freedom of the desert. The lover of ancient history may wander in the footsteps of Alexander or retrace the scorching track of Jenghiz Khan; may

compare his Herodotus with his Marco Polo, and both with facts; may search for some surviving relic of a lost European civilisation, of the Bactrian or Sogdian kingdoms, or for the equally vanished magnificence of the Great Mogul. The student of modern history will welcome the opportunity of renewing his acquaintance on the spot with the successive steps of Russian advance from the first colony on the Caspian to the latest acquisitions on the Murghab and the Heri-Rud; and will eagerly pause at Merv, the dethroned 'Queen of the World,' or inspect the mouldering ramparts of Geok Tepe, where the Akhal Tekkes made their last heroic stand against Skobeleff and the legions of the Great White Czar. Before his eyes the sands of an expiring epoch are fast running out; and the hour-glass of destiny is once again being turned on its base.

Political interest

But the political problems which the route unfolds, and to which it may in part supply a key, will be to many more absorbing still. Is this railway the mere obligatory thread of connection by which Russia desires to hold together, and to place in easy inter-communication, her loosely scattered and heterogeneous possessions in Asia; or is it part of a great design that dreams of a wider dominion and aspires to a more splendid goal? Is it an evidence of concentration, possibly even of contraction, or is it a symbol of aggrandisement and an omen of advance? Russian expansion in Central Asia has, it is often said, proceeded in recent years in such inverse proportion, both to the measure of her own assurances

and to the pressure of natural causes, that we are tempted to ask *quousque tandem*, and may perhaps find in General Annenkoff's achievement the clue to a reply.

Russian designs upon India

Upon no question is there greater conflict of opinion in England than Russia's alleged designs upon India. Are we to believe, as General Grodekoff (the hero of the celebrated ride from Samarkand to Herat in 1878) told Mr. Marvin at St. Petersburg in 1882, that 'no practical Russian general believes in the possibility of an invasion of India,' and that 'the millennium will take place before Russia invades India?' Or are we to hold with General Tchernaieff, a once even superior authority, that 'the Russian invasion of India is perfectly possible, though not easy?' Or, rejecting the mean and the extreme opinion on the one side, shall we fly to the other, and confess ourselves of those who trace from the apocryphal will of Peter down to the present time a steadfast and sinister purpose informing Russian policy, demonstrated by every successive act of advance, lit up by a holocaust of broken promises, and if for a moment it appears to halt in its realisation, merely *reculant pour mieux sauter*, the prize of its ambition being not on the Oxus or even at the Hindu Kush, but at the delta of the Ganges and the Indian Ocean? Or, if territorial aggrandisement appear too mean a motive, shall we find an adequate explanation in commercial cupidity, and detect in Muscovite statesmanship a pardonable desire to usurp the hegemony of Great Britain in the markets of the East?

Or again, joining a perhaps wider school of opinion, shall we admit the act, but minimise the offensive character of the motive, believing that Russia intentionally keeps open the Indian question, not with any idea of supplanting Great Britain in the judgment-seat or at the receipt of custom, but in order that she may have her rival at a permanent disadvantage, and may paralyse the trunk in Europe by galling the limb in Asia? Or, lastly, shall we affect the sentimental style, and expatiate on the great mission of Russia, and the centripetal philanthropic force that draws her like a loadstone into the heart of the Asian continent? All these are views which it is possible to hold, or which are held, by large sections of Englishmen, and upon which a visit to the scene of action may shed some light. Such a visit, too, should enable the traveller to form some impression of the means employed by Russia to reconcile to her rule those with whom she was so lately in violent conflict, and to compare her genius for assimilation with that of other conquering races. Is the apparent security of her sway the artificial product of a tight military grip, or is it the natural outcome of a peaceful organic fusion? How do her methods and their results compare with those of England in India? Very important and far-reaching such questions are; for upon the answer to them which the genius of two nations is engaged in tracing upon the scroll of history, will depend the destinies of the East.

There remain two other questions, upon each of

The Frontier Question

which I hope to furnish some practical information. The first is a comparison of the relative strength for offensive and defensive purposes of the Russian and British frontiers, now brought so close together, and the initial advantages enjoyed by either in the event of the outbreak of war. The second is the feasibility, and, if that be admitted, the likelihood or the wisdom of any future junction of the two railway systems whose most advanced lines at Dushak and at Chaman, are separated by a gap of only 600 miles. General Annenkoff, we know, has all along advocated such an amalgamation; and although past history, the prejudices of the two countries, the intervention of Afghanistan, and a whole host of minor contingencies are arrayed against him, the plan must not, therefore, be condemned offhand as chimerical, but is at least worthy of examination.

In concluding this chapter, let me add that I shall endeavour to approach the discussion of political issues in as impartial a spirit as I can command. I do not class myself either with the Russophiles or the Russophobes. I am as far from echoing the hysterical shriek of the panic-monger or the Jingo as I am from imitating the smug complacency of the politician who chatters about Mervousness only to find that Merv is gone, and thinks that imperial obligation is to be discharged by a querulous diplomatic protest, or evaded by a literary epigram. Whatever be Russia's designs upon India, whether they be serious and inimical or imaginary and fantastic, I hold that the first duty of English statesmen

is to render any hostile intentions futile, to see that our own position is secure, and our frontier impregnable, and so to guard what is without doubt the noblest trophy of British genius, and the most splendid appanage of the Imperial Crown.

CHAPTER II

FROM LONDON TO THE CASPIAN

'Eastward the Star of Empire takes its way.'

Journey to St. Petersburg—Difficulty of obtaining permission—Observations on Russian character—Hostility to Germany and the Germans—Policy of Alexander III.—Russian feeling towards England—Russian feeling towards Austria and France—Continuation of journey—Permission granted—From St. Petersburg to Tiflis—From Tiflis to Baku and the Caspian—Approach to Uzun Ada.

Journey to St. Petersburg

In the summer and autumn months an express train leaves Berlin at 8.30 in the morning, and reaches St. Petersburg on the evening of the following day. A traveller from England can either catch this train by taking the day boat from Queenborough to Flushing, and making the through journey without a halt, in which case he will reach the Russian capital in sixty-one hours; or by taking the night boat to Flushing, and reaching Berlin the following evening, he can allow himself the luxury of a night between the sheets before proceeding on his way. At 8.30 P.M. on the day after leaving Berlin he is deposited on the platform of the Warsaw station at St. Petersburg. The journey *vid* St. Petersburg and Moscow is not, of course, the shortest or most expeditious route to the Caucasus and the Caspian. The

quickest route, in point of time, is *viâ* Berlin to Cracow, and from there by Elisavetgrad to Kharkov on the main Russian line of railway running south from Moscow, whence the journey is continued to Vladikavkas and the Caucasus. A less fatiguing but rather longer deviation is the journey by rail from Cracow to Odessa, and thence by sea to Batoum, and train to Tiflis and Baku. A third alternative is the new overland route to Constantinople, and thence by steamer to Batoum. I travelled, however, *viâ* St. Petersburg and Moscow, partly because I wished to see those places, but mainly because I hoped at the former to obtain certain information and introductions which might be useful to me in Georgia and Transcaspia. Moreover, the stranger to Russia cannot do better than acquire his first impression of her power and importance at the seat of government, the majestic emanation of Peter's genius on the banks of the Neva.

Difficulty in obtaining permission

When I left London I was assured by the representatives of the Wagon-Lits Company that all necessary arrangements had been made, that a special permit, *une autorisation spéciale*, to visit Transcaspia had been obtained, and that the rest of the party had already started from Paris. Not caring to share in the earlier movements of the excursion, which involved a delay in Europe, I proposed to join them at Vladikavkas. As soon, however, as I reached St. Petersburg I had reason to congratulate myself upon having gone to headquarters at once, for I found that matters had not been quite so smoothly

arranged, and that there were formidable obstacles still to be overcome. The Russian Government is a very elaborate and strictly systematised, but also a very complicated, piece of machinery; and the motive power required to set its various parts in action is often out of all proportion to the result achieved. It would not seem to be a very serious or difficult matter to determine whether a small party—less than a dozen—of tourists should be allowed to travel over a line, the opening of which to passenger traffic had been trumpeted throughout Europe, and an invitation to travel by which had originated from the director-general of the line himself. However, things are not done quite so simply at St. Petersburg. It transpired that for the permission in question the consent of five independent authorities must be sought:—(1) The Governor-General of Turkestan, General Rosenbach, whose headquarters are at Tashkent; (2) the Governor-General of Transcaspia, General Komaroff, who resides at Askabad; (3) the head of the Asiatic department of the Foreign Office at St. Petersburg, M. Zinovieff; (4) the Minister of Foreign Affairs, M. de Giers, or his colleague, General Vlangali; (5) the Minister for War, General Vanoffski; the last named being the supreme and ultimate court of appeal. All these independent officials had to be consulted, and their concurrent approval obtained.

My first discovery was that not one of this number had yet signified his assent, and very grave doubts were expressed by General Vlangali, in answer to

inquiries, as to the likelihood of their doing so. I even heard that the Italian Embassy had applied for leave for an officer in the Italian army, and had been point blank refused. The only Englishmen—in addition to two or three Indian officers, who, joining the railway at Tcharjui or Merv on their return from India, had travelled by it to the Caspian—to whom official permission had so far been granted were the 'Times' correspondent; Dr. Lansdell, who had recently started upon another roving expedition of mingled Bible distribution and discovery in Central Asia; and Mr. Littledale, a sportsman, who had with great difficulty obtained leave to go as far as Samarkand with a view of proceeding from there in quest of the *ovis poli* in the remote mountains of the Pamir. In this pursuit I record with pleasure the fact that the last-named gentleman was entirely successful, being the first Englishman who has ever shot a male specimen of this famous and inaccessible animal. Matters were further complicated by the absence of the Minister for War, who was accompanying the Czar in his imperial progress through the south. One of my earliest steps was to seek an interview with the representative at St. Petersburg of the Compagnie des Wagon-Lits, and to inquire what steps he had taken or proposed to take. I found that he had as yet obtained no assurance of official ratification, but was relying upon the patronage and promises of General Annenkoff, who was absent and believed to be in Nice. I was, however, recommended by him to call upon M. Mestcherin, the resident engineer to

the railway, who had greatly interested himself in the expedition and was doing his utmost to further its success. The first item of reassuring news that I had received fell from his lips. A telegram had been received from General Rosenbach, to whom the names of the proposed party had been submitted, signifying his approval; and another of a similar character was hourly expected from General Komaroff. This intelligence was the more satisfactory, because I heard from M. Mestcherin that it was upon General Rosenbach's supposed objections that the authorities at St. Petersburg had principally based theirs; the General's hostility being attributed to his unwillingness to have a party of foreigners anywhere near the frontier, pending the unsettled rebellion of Is-hak Khan against the Afghan Amir in a quarter of Afghan Turkestan at so short a distance from the Russian lines. I confess I regarded this as a plausible objection, though I hardly thought that the situation would be much aggravated by the casual and almost meteoric transit of a harmless party of polyglot tourists over the railway line. However, these scruples, if entertained, had now been abandoned, and the hope presented itself that the confidence displayed by General Rosenbach might awake a similar generosity in the breasts of his official superiors in the capital. M. Mestcherin had no doubt whatever that this would be the case. Of certain information which he gave me on the subject of the railway I shall speak in a subsequent chapter. I left his apartments in a more sanguine frame of mind than I had yet

ventured to indulge. Nevertheless, the fact that there had lately been an accident on the line, owing apparently to its imperfect construction, in which more persons than one were said to have been killed, and the rumoured total breakdown of the bridge over the Oxus at Tcharjui, were discouraging omens, and suggested a possible explanation for the reluctance of the Russian official world to admit the inquisitive eyes of strangers. These were arguments, however, which could have no weight with General Annenkoff, who was credited with an absolute confidence in the capacities of his staff, and whose cosmopolitan sympathies I had no reason to question.

Observations on Russian character

Passing through St. Petersburg, and being brought into communication with residents there, as well as with Russians in other parts of my journey, there were certain impressions upon the more superficial aspects of Russian politics which I could not fail to derive. Among these the strongest was perhaps the least expected and the most agreeable.

If it is an exaggeration to say that every Englishman enters Russia a Russophobe, and leaves it a Russophile, at least it is true that even a short residence in that country tempers the earlier estimate which he may have been led to form of the character of the population and its rulers. This is mainly attributable to the frank and amiable manners and to the extreme civility of the people, from the highest official to the humblest *moujik*. The Russian gentleman has all the polish of the Frenchman, without the vague suggestion of Gallic veneer; the Russian lower class may

be stupid, but they are not, like the Teuton, brusque. The stranger's path is smoothed for him by everyone to whom he appeals for help, and though manners do not preclude national enmities, at least they go a long way towards conciliating personal friendships.

Hostility to Germany and the Germans

A second reason for the altered opinion of the Englishman is his early discovery that there is no widespread hostility to England in Russia; and that he and his countrymen are by no means regarded as a German, for instance, or more latterly an Italian is regarded in France, or as an Austrian used to be regarded in Italy. Nothing can be more clear than that the main and dominating feeling of the Russian mind in relation to foreigners is an abiding and overpowering dislike of Germany. This is a chord upon which any Russian statesman, much more any Slavophile, can play with absolute certainty of response, and which rings even to the touch of a passing or accidental hand. Dislike of German manners, distrust of German policy, detestation of German individuality, these were sentiments which I heard expressed on all sides without a pretence of concealment, and which I believe have grown into an intuitive instinct with this generation of the Russian people. I could give several instances of this animosity, but will content myself with two or three which came under my own notice. A Russian officer explained to me an alleged case of brutal treatment of a child by its parents by the remark '*Que voulez-vous? C'est un Allemand!*' From another Russian official, whose opinion I elicited in conversation, I

received the emphatic declaration '*Ce sont des barbares.*' A Russian gentleman and large landed proprietor volunteered the information, in which he saw nothing remarkable, that he so abhorred Germany that if passing through that country nothing would induce him even to spend a night at Berlin. A feeling so deep as this and so widespread cannot be without serious and solid foundation any more that it can be ignored in casting the horoscope of Russia's future. To trace the sources of this anti-Teuton feeling would lead me too far from my subject, and would require a digression that might easily swell into a treatise. But it is not difficult to discover on the surface of Russian life, both public and private, a score of points at which German contact or competition means friction, and may readily generate hatred. For not only is this sentiment a political sentiment, arising from the near propinquity and overwhelming preponderance of German power in Europe, from the usurpation in Continental politics by a new-fledged empire of the military ascendency claimed by Russia at the beginning of this century, and from the belief that Russia has been thwarted at every point of the international compass, and has suffered, instead of gaining, by the Berlin Treaty alike in Servia, Bulgaria, and Roumania, owing to the dark machinations of Bismarck alone;—not only, I repeat, is this a popular impression, but the individual German is brought into constant and disagreeable collision with the Russian in the relations of ordinary life. An aristocracy and landed proprietary largely German, a

bureaucracy and official clique stocked with German names, a reigning dynasty that is of German extraction; German monopoly of business, trade, and banking on the largest scale, and formidable German competition in the more humble spheres of industry; the preference given by men of business and owners of estates to German managers, stewards, or agents, whose thrifty and trustworthy capacities render them an infinitely preferable choice to the corrupt and careless Russian; above all, the overwhelming antithesis between German and Russian character, the one vigilant, uncompromising, stiff, precise; the other sleepy, nonchalant, wasteful, and lax;—all these facts have branded their mark on Russian opinion with the indelible potency of some corrosive acid, and have engendered a state of feeling which a prudent fear may temporarily disguise but will not permanently mitigate, and which the mutual amenities of emperors may gloss over but cannot pretend to annul.

Policy of Alexander III.

In the present reign this anti-German feeling has reached a climax. Naturally a man of conservative instincts, and driven partly by circumstances, partly by irresponsibility, into illiberal and reactionary extremes, Alexander III. has for some time devoted himself to stamping out of Russia all non-Russian elements, and setting up an image, before which all must fall down and worship, of a Russia, single, homogeneous, exclusive, self-sufficing, self-contained. Foreign names, foreign tongues, a foreign faith, particularly if the one are Teuton, and the other is Lutheran, are vexed, or prohibited, or assailed.

Foreign competition in any quarter, commercial or otherwise, is crushed by heavy deadweights hung round its neck. Foreign concessions are as flatly refused as they were once eagerly conceded. The Government even declines to allow any but Russian money to be invested in Russian undertakings. Foreign managers and foreign workmen are under a bureaucratic ban. German details are expunged from the national uniform; the German language is forbidden in the schools of the Baltic provinces; German fashions are proscribed at court. 'The stranger that is within thy gates' is the bug-bear and *bête noire* of Muscovite statesmanship. There is no cosmopolitanism in the governing system of the Czar. What Russians call patriotism, what foreigners call rank selfishness, is the keynote of his *régime*. 'Russia for the Russians,' has been adopted as the motto, not of a radical faction, but of an irresponsible autocracy, and is preached, not by wild demagogues, but by an all-powerful despot.

Russian feeling towards England

While this attitude is universally exemplified in the relations between Russia and Germany, and is also typical of the commercial and imperial policy which she adopts towards this country, it is not in the latter case accompanied or followed by any personal or national antipathy.

Of political hostility to Great Britain there may be a certain amount, particularly in the governing hierarchy and in the army, arising from the obvious fact that the interests of the two nations have long been diametrically opposed in the settlement of

Russia's chief end of action, the Balkan Peninsula, and from the strained relations between the two countries springing out of the events that so nearly culminated in war in 1885. This feeling, however, is accompanied by a candid respect for the confidence, and what Carlyle somewhere called 'the silent fury and aristocratic impassivity' of the English character, while in its most aggravated form it is wholly divorced from any dislike to the individual or repulsion to the race. Skobeleff, though he used to say 'I hate England,' and undeniably looked upon it as the ambition of his life to fight us in Central Asia—an action by the way in which he had not the slightest doubt of success—was on friendly terms with many Englishmen, and had been heard to say that he never met an Englishman who was not a gentleman. In externals, indeed, there is much in common between the Russian and the Briton, exhibiting, as both do, along with the temperament, the physique, the complexion and colour of the north, a unity of qualities that make for greatness, viz. self-reliance, pride, a desperate resolve, adventurousness, and a genius for discipline. Further than this I would not push the resemblance. A Russian will tell you that to judge the two people by the same moral standard is as unfair as to submit to the same physical test a child and a grown man. Russia is understood to be working out her own salvation. If she repudiates the accepted canons of regeneration, she may perhaps claim, in self-defence, to civilise herself in her own way.

The prevailing friendliness in Russia towards

Russian feeling towards Austria and France

Englishmen is a factor not unworthy of note in framing any induction as to the future; the more so as the same cannot be said of her attitude towards other people with whom she is supposed to be on more intimate terms than with ourselves. Austria she regards with undisguised hostility, not free from contempt. A political system so heterogeneous she credits with no stability. The military power of her southern rival she derides as a masquerade. To use a phrase I heard employed by a Russian, 'Austria stings like a gnat and bites like an adder;' and ought, in the opinion of many ardent Muscovites, to be crushed like the one, or stamped under heel like the other. Her alleged sympathy with France is a tie of a more artificial character than is often supposed, and is the outcome not of national affinities, but of political needs. It is the necessary corollary in fact to her detestation of Germany. French politics are followed with absolute indifference in St. Petersburg, except in so far as they relate to Berlin; and there is probably no country in Europe where there is a heartier prejudice against music-hall statesmanship and a see-saw constitution, or a more masculine contempt for the refinements of an epicene civilisation. It is noteworthy that in the journalistic and literary amenities, which writers of the two nationalities interchange, while the Frenchman plunges at once into headlong adulation, a discreet flattery is the utmost as a rule that the Russian will concede.

The doubts which had arisen as to the prospects of my journey were still unsolved when I left St.

Petersburg; while at Moscow they were yet further aggravated by the information which I received from headquarters. I was advised on the highest authority not to persevere in the attempt, and was warned that in any case an answer could not be expected for a considerable time. Subsequently to this I even heard that our names had been submitted to the War Minister, who had declined to sanction them, which refusal was further declared to be irrevocable. In spite of this ominous dissuasion, which I had some ground for believing to be due to a jealousy between the departments of the Foreign Office and War Office at St. Petersburg, I decided to start from Moscow, and did so after waiting there for six days. It was not till I reached Vladikavkas, on the Caucasus, three days later, that a telegraphic despatch conveyed to me the unexpected and welcome tidings that permission had after all been conceded, and that the entire party, the rest of whom were now assembled in a state of expectancy at Tiflis, might proceed across the Caspian. All is well that ends well; and I am not any longer concerned to explore the tortuous windings of diplomatic policy or official intrigue at St. Petersburg. General Annenkoff had assured us that we should be allowed to go, and leave having been given, with him undoubtedly remained the honours of war. Later on we heard that the Minister for War, upon seeing the permission of Generals Rosenbach and Komaroff, had at once given his consent without even informing the Foreign Office. Conceive the feelings of the latter!

Continuation of journey; permission granted

From St. Petersburg to Tiflis

Were I writing a narrative of travel, I might invite my readers to halt with me for a few moments at St. Petersburg, at Moscow, at Nijni-Novgorod, in the Caucasus, at Tiflis, or at Baku. I stayed in each of these places, exchanging the grandiose splendour and civilised smartness of the capital—with its architecture borrowed from Italy, its amusements from Paris, and its pretentiousness from Berlin—for the Oriental irregularity and bizarre beauty of Moscow, an Eastern exotic transplanted to the West, an inland Constantinople, a Christian Cairo. No more effective illustration could be furnished of the Janus-like character of this huge political structure, with its vast unfilled courts and corridors in the east, and, as Peter the Great phrased it, its northern window looking out upon Europe, than the outward appearance of its two principal cities, the one a Western plagiarism, the other an Asiatic original. Through the Caucasus we drove, four horses abreast attached to a kind of family barouche, by the famous Dariel Road. Piercing one of the finest gorges in Europe, it climbs a height of 8,000 ft., and skirts the base of a height of 16,000 ft. This is the celebrated pass that drew a line to the conquests alike of Alexander and Justinian, the Caucasian Gates of the ancient world, which shut off the East on this side from the West, and were never owned at entrance and exit by the same Power till they fell into Russia's hands. Above them tower the mighty rocks of Kazbek on which the tortured Prometheus hung, and away to the right is Elbruz, the *doyen* of European summits. This road is for the

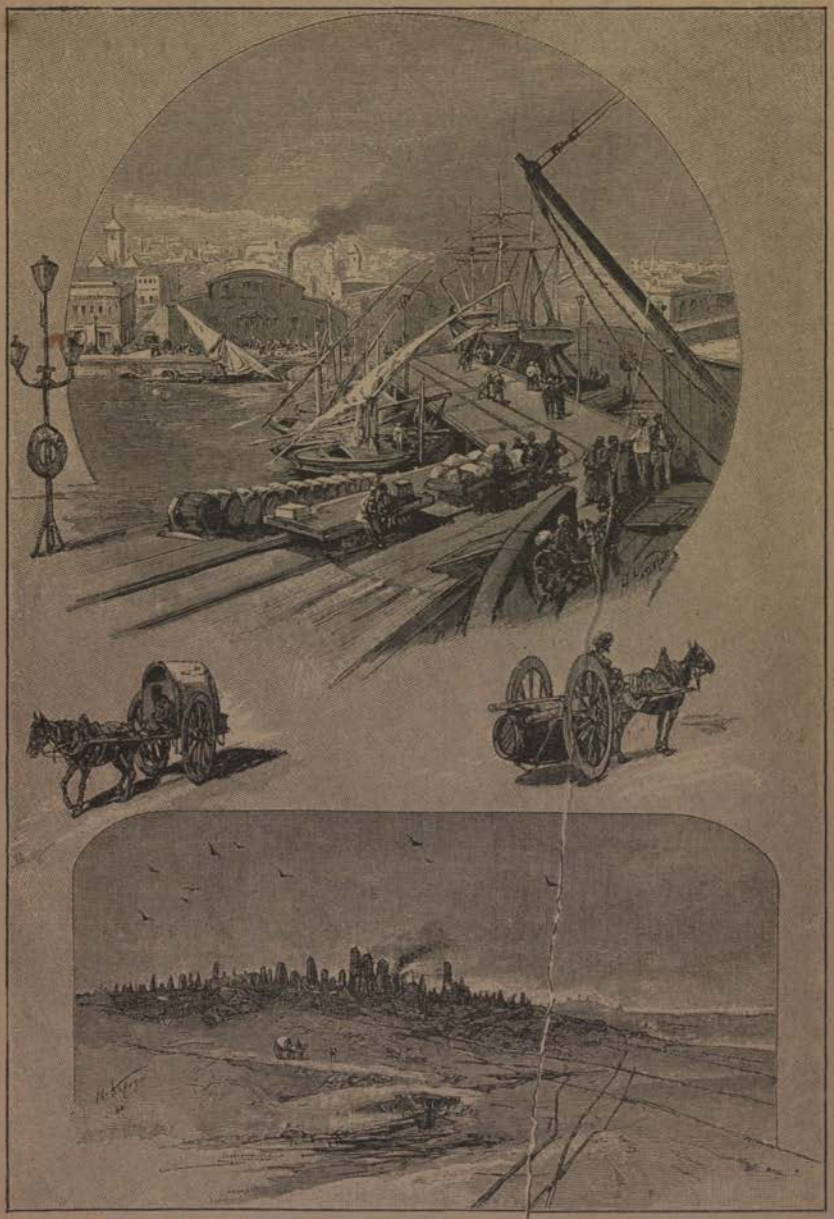
present at any rate, and will probably long remain, of the highest military importance, as it is the first line of communication both with Armenia and the Caspian; and its secure tenure dispenses with the delays of transport and navigation by the Black Sea. Though skilfully engineered, substantially metalled, and constantly repaired (relays of soldiers being employed in the winter to cut a passage through the snows), it cannot be compared for evenness or solidity with the roads which the British have made in similar surroundings in many parts of the world. It debouches 135 miles from Vladikavkas upon Tiflis, where the traveller begins to realise that though still in the same country he has changed continents. There I found the rest of the party assembled, consisting of two Englishmen, three Frenchmen, an Italian, and a Dutchman. With an Englishman, a Pole, and a Mingrelian, to whom was subsequently added a Tajik of Bokhara, as our guides and conductors, we constituted about as representative a body as General Annenkoff in his most cosmopolitan of moments could have desired.

From Tiflis to Baku and the Caspian

At Tiflis we received from General Sheremétieff, acting governor in the absence of Prince Dondoukoff Korsakoff, who had gone to meet the Emperor, the official document, or *oktriti list*, authorising us to cross the Caspian and to travel in the Russian dominions in Central Asia. The ordinary passport, though viséed and counter-viséed, is useless east of the Caspian, and many a traveller, straining its limited sanctity, has been turned back from the

regions to which the *oktriti list* alone will procure admission. With this magical piece of paper in our possession we started without any further delay by the single daily train, that leaving Tiflis at ten in the evening arrives at Baku between four and five on the following afternoon. There we spent a day inspecting the peculiar features of the place and visiting the works of Balakhani, some eight miles from the town, where a forest of tall wooden towers like chimney-stacks marks the site of the deep wells from which the crude naphtha either springs in spontaneous jets from hidden subterranean sources, or is drawn up by steam power in long cylindrical tubes, and despatched to the distilleries in the town. Of this petroleum industry, which has reached the most gigantic proportions, I will say nothing here; because I should only be repeating secondhand what is already to be found in works specially devoted to the subject.[1] I have the further incentive to silence that of previous visitors who have described their journey to Transcaspia scarcely one has resisted the temptation to speech. At 5.30 in the afternoon we put off from the wharf in the steamboat 'Prince Bariatinski,' belonging to the Caucasus and Mercury Company, which was frequently impressed by Skobeleff and his troops in the Turkoman campaigns of 1879, 1880, and 1881. As we steamed out on the placid waters of the Caspian, whose surface far out to sea gleamed dully under the metallic lustre of the

[1] Vide a new edition of *The Region of Eternal Fire.* By Charles Marvin. London, 1888.



WHARF AT BAKU—PERSIAN ARBA—PERSIAN WATER-CART—OIL WELLS OF BALAKHANI.

floating oil, the setting sun lit up an altar of fire behind the pink cliffs of the Apsheron peninsula, which would have turned to ridicule the most prodigal devotion, even in their palmiest days, of the defunct fire-worshippers of Baku. On the other side a leaden canopy of smoke overhung the petroleum works, and the dingy quarters of the manufacturing town.

Approach to Uzun Ada

At sunrise on the next morning rocky land was visible to the north-east. This was the mountainous background to Krasnovodsk, the first Russian settlement twenty years ago on the eastern shore of the Caspian, and the original capital of the province of Transcaspia. Thither the terminus of the railway is likely to be transferred from Uzun Ada, on account of the shallow and shifting anchorage at the latter place. Later on low sandhills, clean, yellow, and ubiquitous, fringed the shore or were distributed in melancholy islets over the surface of the bay. The whole appearance of the coast is strikingly reminiscent of a river delta, a theory which is in close harmony with the admitted geological fact that the Oxus once emptied itself by one at least of its mouths or tributaries into the Balkan Bay. Soon we entered a narrow channel, at the extremity of which the masts of ships, the smoking funnels of steamers, and several projecting wooden piers and wharves indicated a position of considerable commercial activity; and at 2.30 P.M. were moored to the landing stage of Uzun Ada, on which appeared to be gathered the entire population of the settlement, whose sole distraction

the arrival and departure of the steamer must be. This is the present starting point of the Transcaspian Railway; and here accordingly I pause to give a historical retrospect of the origin, *raison d'être*, construction and character of this important undertaking. Let any reader who revolts against dull detail omit the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

THE TRANSCASPIAN RAILWAY

I'll put a girdle round about the earth
In forty minutes.

SHAKSPEARE, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act ii. sc. i.

Origin of the idea of a Central Asian railway—Scheme of M. Ferdinand de Lesseps—Attitude of England—Idea of a Transcaspian railway—Adoption of the plan by Skobeleff—Completion to Kizil Arvat in December 1881—Ideas of further extension—Opposition to the Transcaspian scheme—Extension from Kizil Arvat to the Oxus—From the Oxus to Samarkand—Technical information about the line—Exclusively military character—Material of the line—Character and pay of the workmen—Method of construction—Cost—Facilities of construction—Difficulties of water—Difficulties of sand—Contrivances to resist the sands—Difficulty of fuel and lighting—Rolling stock of the railway—Stations—Duration and cost of journey.

Origin of the idea of a Central Asian Railway

VERY early after the Russian occupation of Turkestan in 1865—I must ask my readers to bear very closely in mind the distinction between Turkestan, or Central Asia proper, the capital of which is Tashkent, and Turkomania, or the country of the Turkomans, which extends from the Caspian to Merv—and its conversion into a Russian possession, administered by a Governor-General, in 1867, the question of more rapid communication with Europe was raised. For a time the idea was entertained that the streams of

the Syr Daria or Jaxartes, and, after the conquest of Khiva and practical absorption of Bokhara in 1873, of the Amu Daria or Oxus, would provide the requisite channels of connection; and a great deal was heard of the future Aral flotilla. But the difficulties arising from the river navigation, which have not to this day been successfully surmounted, speedily threw these schemes into the background, and the plan of a Central Asian Railway began to take definite shape. In 1873 a Russian official was entrusted with the duty of preparing a report on the feasibility of constructing a line from Orenburg to Tashkent; and early in the same year, M. Cotard, who had been one of the engineers employed upon the Suez Canal, meeting M. Ferdinand de Lesseps, whose hands were for the moment empty, at Constantinople, suggested to him this fresh field of conquest.

Scheme of M. Ferdinand de Lesseps

M. de Lesseps was nothing loth. He at once put pen to paper, and in a letter dated May 1, 1873, to General Ignatieff, then Russian Ambassador at Constantinople (followed later on by one to the Emperor Alexander II.), he unfolded the details of his scheme, which was no less than the recommendation of a through railway from Calais to Calcutta, a distance of 7,500 miles—the portion from Orenburg to Samarkand to be laid by Russia, and from Samarkand to Peshawur by England. General Ignatieff replied with ready enthusiasm, welcoming the idea because of its commercial and political importance, and not least because it would show to the world 'the

essentially pacific and civilising character of Russian influence in those regions.' He further declared his 'intimate conviction that this grandiose enterprise, though it might appear at first sight both risky and chimerical, was yet destined to be realised in a future more or less near.' The indefatigable M. de Lesseps then went to Paris, where a small society was formed to undertake the preliminary topographical surveys. These were to be submitted to a committee of experts, who were to report upon the technical feasibility of the enterprise, and on its future commercial and fiscal advantages. Definite local surveys were next to be made, backed by a financial company; and, finally, the work of construction was to commence, and to last for six years.

Attitude of England

Meanwhile, however, the consent of another high contracting party was required; and M. de Lesseps had in the interim opened communications with Lord Granville. In England the project was not received with much alacrity; and when certain of the French engineers, who had been despatched to India to reconnoitre the ground, arrived upon the Afghan frontier, permission was refused to them to advance beyond, on account of the difficulties in which England might thereby be involved with those turbulent regions. After their return to Europe, the project languished; and before long M. de Lesseps, scenting a more favourable spoil in another hemisphere, withdrew his attention and his patronage to the Panama Canal. Since then the idea, in its original shape, has not again been heard of.

Idea of a Trans-caspian Railway

For some time afterwards the design of a Central Asian Railway slumbered. But the commencement of the series of Russian campaigns against the Turkomans in 1877, and the gradual shifting of the centre of political gravity in Central Asia from Turkestan to Transcaspia brought about its revival in another shape, and has since ended in its realisation, not, however, by a line over the steppes from the North, but by one from the Caspian and the West. It was in 1879, while General Lomakin was prosecuting his series of ill-adventured expeditions against the Akhal Tekkes that mention was first made of a Transcaspian Railway (his successor, General Tergukasoff laying stress upon the idea in a report upon the unsuccessful campaign of that year, and upon the proper means by which to subjugate the Akhal Oasis); and in 1880, after Skobeleff had been appointed Commander-in-Chief, in order to retrieve the Russian laurels, that the work was actually taken in hand.

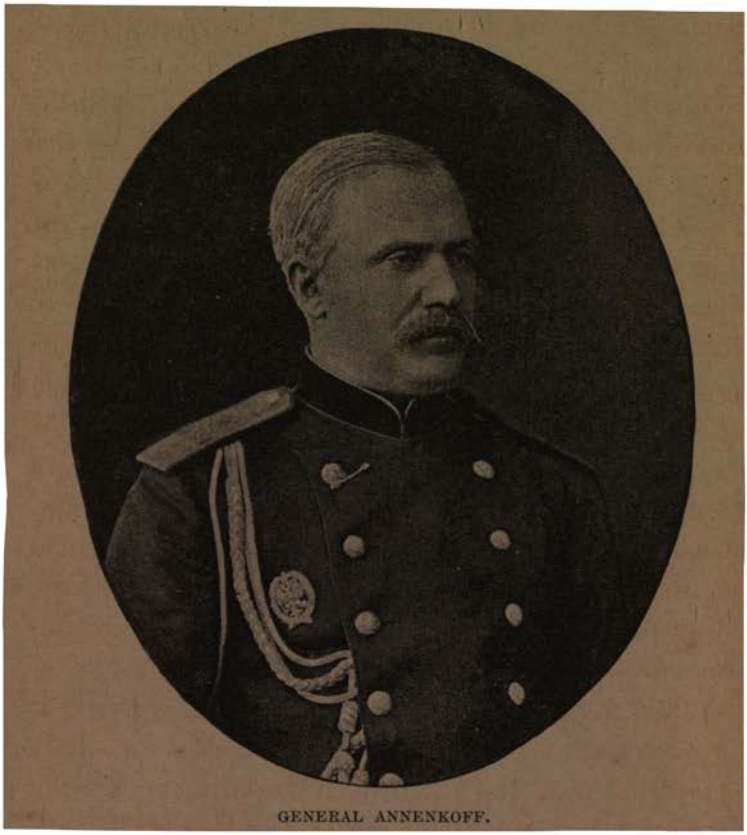
Adoption of the plan by Skobeleff

At that time it was supposed that the subjugation of the Turkoman steppes would entail a much more arduous task than subsequently proved to be the case, the disastrous defeat of Lomakin at the Tekke fort of Denghil Tepe, more commonly known as Geok Tepe, in September 1879, having profoundly discouraged the Russians. Skobeleff was accordingly given *carte blanche* in his selection both of the manner and means of operation. He was commissioned to conquer and to annex; but was allowed to do both after his own fashion. Now the main difficulty in the preceding campaign had arisen

from the scarcity and loss of transport animals. During the expedition of 1879, 8,377 camels had perished out of a total of 12,273 employed; and at the end of Skobeleff's own campaign, a year and a half later, only 350 remained out of a total of 12,596.[1] To meet this initial drawback, it was suggested to Skobeleff that he should employ a light railroad. While his base still remained at Tchikishliar, near the mouth of the Atrek River, on the Caspian, a service of traction engines was projected by General Petrusevitch, and subsequently a tramway to the edge of the Akhal Oasis. But Skobeleff having almost immediately resolved to shift his main base northwards to Krasnovodsk, opposite Baku, a new set of proposals saw the light. A genuine railroad was now spoken of. A proposal made by an American contractor named Berry, who offered to construct a line from the Caspian to Kizil Arvat, a distance of 145 miles, at his own expense, with material brought from some disused railroad in the States, and upon completion, either to hand it over to the Government, or to continue its working with an annual state guarantee of 132,000*l.*, was refused; and General Annenkoff, formerly military attaché at Paris, and at that time Comptroller of the Transport Department of the Russian Army, who had been entrusted in 1877 with the transport arrangements in the Turkish war, and had had considerable experience of military railways since, was invited by the Commander-in-Chief to his

[1] Vide *The War in Turkomania.* By General N. I. Grodekoff. Chaps. ii. and xi.

aid. He recommended the use of 100 miles of steel rails that had been purchased for use in the Balkan peninsula in 1878, in the event of the collapse of the Congress at Berlin, and had been lying idly stored ever since in European Russia. These were at once



GENERAL ANNENKOFF.

transhipped to Michaelovsk, a point on the coast considerably to the south of Krasnovodsk which was selected by Annenkoff as the starting point of the line; but even so, no decision was yet arrived at as to a permanent broad-gauge line, orders having been given

to the Décauville and Maltseff firms for the supply of small locomotives and wagons, and of 66 miles of light movable narrow-gauge rails.[1] It was thought that these might be used for the immediate conveyance of stores to the front, and that the success or failure of the smaller experiment would then determine the policy of extending the broad-gauge line, which from motives of economy it was decided to lay at once through the belt of sandhills contiguous to the shore. For the purpose of the campaign Skobeleff from the beginning regarded the line as a purely secondary and accessory means of transport,[2] though his eyes were speedily opened to its future possibilities and importance. So confident, however, was he of swift success, that, having completed his own preparations, he announced his intention of finishing the campaign before the railway, which it was only intended to construct as far as Kizil Arvat, 145 miles from the Caspian, was ready to be placed

[1] Fifty miles of light steel rails, to be laid upon a 20-inch gauge, and 100 trucks were ordered from the Russian firm of Maltseff; 16 miles of rails and 500 trucks from the Décauville works in France. Only two locomotives were ordered (from the latter firm); as it was intended to work the railroad by horses, 1,000 Kirghiz animals being bought for the purpose in Transcaspia.

[2] At the first Military Council held at St. Petersburg, as early as January 1880, to discuss the forthcoming campaign, Grodekoff relates that Skobeleff, who had already been designated though not appointed Commander-in-Chief, 'declared that a railway alone could not be trusted to bring the expedition to a successful issue, and accordingly he proposed to employ camels principally, treating the railroad as a secondary line of communication.'—*The War in Turkomania*, chap. iii. Again, in June 1880, he wrote: 'It is evident that the railway now being constructed can of itself be of no importance for the narrow aims of the Akhal Tekke expedition' (chap. v.) He continually repeated the same opinion.

at his disposal—a boast which, as a matter of fact, he triumphantly carried out.

Meanwhile General Annenkoff, though beaten in the race of time, had not been idle. A railway battalion of 1,500 men, with special aptitudes or of special experience, was recruited in successive companies as required from European Russia; skilful engineers were engaged; a credit was opened by the Russian Government; and the pick and shovel were soon at work upon the virgin sandhills of the Caspian littoral. Geok Tepe was carried by storm in January 1881, and General Annenkoff, having been wounded in one of the earlier reconnaissances, was compelled to return to St. Petersburg. But in his absence the labour was not allowed to slacken; the Décauville line had already been abandoned as the main system, and was used to assist in laying the broader gauge. In December 1881 the latter was completed, and the first locomotive steamed into Kizil Arvat. From these small and modest beginnings, undertaken with a purely strategic object, and for the attainment of a particular end, viz. the pacification of the Akhal Oasis, have grown the 900 miles of steel that now unite the Caspian with Samarkand.

Completion to Kizil Arvat, Dec. 1881

The success of this preliminary experiment, and the comparative facility and economy with which the obstacles of drought and desert had been overcome, encouraged General Annenkoff to meditate an expansion of his scheme. With this object in view, the engineer Lessar, who subsequently became well known in this country from his connection with the Afghan

Ideas of further extension

Boundary Commission, and the Mussulman officer Alikhanoff, were despatched in the years 1881, 1882 and 1883 to conduct a series of explorations in the *terra incognita* that lay towards Merv and Herat; while at St. Petersburg Annenkoff himself published a brochure entitled 'The Akhal Tekke Oasis and the Roads to India,' in which he advocated, chiefly on commercial grounds, an extension to Herat, and even a junction with the Indian Railway system at Quetta. Russian officers and statesmen thought fit to pooh-pooh the suggestion in their public utterances, General Grodekoff, in an interview with Mr. Marvin in February 1882, ridiculing the idea of an extension of the line beyond Kizil Arvat, and even Skobeleff declaring his total disbelief in its continuance beyond Askabad. It is demonstrable that these protestations were merely a part of that policy of glib assurance, that has so often been employed by Russia to calm the awakened susceptibilities of England. For in Grodekoff's history of Skobeleff's campaign we read that the latter took the keenest interest in the development of the railway; that from the earliest date he recommended its extension; and that as far back as June 1880, a year and a half before his disavowal of further advance to Mr. Marvin, he had expressed himself in a letter as follows:—

When peace is restored in the Steppe, the line must be prolonged, either to Askabad, or, as seems to me more urgent, to Kunia Urgenj or to the Amu Daria. We shall thus have steam communication between St. Petersburg and Samarkand. I am certain that a cheaper or shorter way

cannot be found of uniting Turkestan with the rest of the Empire, and of ensuring its safety and the development of its trade. If we intend to get any return from our present enormous expenditure, we must popularise the Steppe route between the Caspian and the basin of the Amu. Here, as elsewhere, the initiative rests with the Government.[1]

Opposition to the Transcaspian Scheme

Though the Transcaspian Railway was under such distinguished patronage, it was not without enemies, even in high military circles in Russia. General Tchernaieff, the original conqueror of Turkestan, who was appointed Governor General of the Central Asian Dominions in 1882, foreseeing the supercession of Turkestan by Transcaspia which Annenkoff's railway would entail, and having always contended for a more northerly approach to his province, urged an extension from Kizil Arvat to Khiva, which might in turn be connected with the Caspian, and whence the waterway of the Oxus would provide an approach to Bokhara. These projects met with little support except from the Turkestan partisans, and were not rendered more palatable by the scarcity of commercial inducements. When the Transcaspian programme had finally won the day, Tchernaieff, piqued at his failure, exploded his irritation in a letter to the 'Novoe Vremya' in the summer of 1886, entitled 'An Academic Railway,' in which he threw a parting douche of very cold water upon General Annenkoff's scheme, and declared his own preference for a line from Saratov on the Volga to Kungrad on the Amu Daria, between Khiva and the Aral Sea. In

[1] Grodekoff's *War in Turkomania*, chap. v.

the meantime, however, he had himself ceased to be a *persona grata* with the powers that be in Russia; his name was no longer one to conjure with in the controversy; and the star of Transcaspia continued in the ascendant.

Extension from Kizil Arvat to the Oxus

Though projects of advance had undoubtedly been formulated as well as entertained, Kizil Arvat remained the terminus till the famous affray on the Kushk between General Komaroff's troops and the Afghans on March 30, 1885, that so deeply stirred public opinion in this country, and all but embroiled the two nations in war. From that moment the character and conception of the railway changed. No longer the prudent auxiliary to a single campaign, it became the mark of a definite policy, imperial in its quality and dimensions. Till then the Russians themselves had regarded the line as an isolated and limited undertaking, rather than as part of a great design. It now emerged as a menace to England and a warning to Asia. On June 2, 1885, within two months of the Penjdeh affair, appeared the Czar's ukase entrusting Annenkoff with the continuance of the line towards the Afghan frontier. A second railway battalion of picked men was enrolled at Moscow. Reaching Kizil Arvat on July 3, they began work on July 13; and while the British forces were engaged night and day upon the analogous railways of Hurnai and the Bolan in Beluchistan, the Russians were as steadily pushing forward their hostile parallels from the opposite direction. On December 11, 1885, the first train ran into Askabad

(136 miles from Kizil Arvat), which had in 1882 been made the capital of the newly constituted province of Transcaspia, and the residence of a Governor-General. Meanwhile, in February 1884, Merv had been quietly annexed, and the prolongation of the line to that place was an inevitable corollary of what had already been done. On July 14, 1886, the whilom 'Queen of the World' was reached, 500 miles from the Caspian, the lines actually cutting the walls of the great fortress of Koushid Khan Kala, built with such sanguine anticipations only five years before as an inexpugnable barrier to Muscovite advance. But Merv could no more be a halting-place than Askabad; and, after a pause of six weeks, to recruit the energies of the railway battalion, the same year witnessed the extension of the line to Tcharjui and the Oxus, a further distance of 150 miles, General Annenkoff's employés having now reached such a pitch of mechanical proficiency in their labours that the last 500 miles had been constructed in seventeen months, or at the rate of from a mile to a mile and a half in a day.

From the Oxus to Samarkand

There remained only the bridging of the Amu Daria, a work of which more anon, and the completion of the line to Samarkand. The imperial ukase authorising the latter was issued on February 7, 1887. This work was nominally completed in time for the ceremony of inauguration in May, 1888, and on the 27th of that month a triumphal train, decked with flags, and loaded with soldiers, steamed, amid the roar of cannon and the music of bands, into the

ancient capital of the East. Some time previously the starting point of the railway had been shifted from Michaelovsk to what was considered the superior landing-place of Uzun Ada, on an island 15 miles to the north-west, where it remains for the present. The through communication thus established has been continued and perfected since, and a page of the Russian Bradshaw testifies to the regularity, though at present it does not say much for the speed, of the Transcaspian service. The entire distance is 1,342 versts, or not far short of 900 miles. Such was the origin and such has been the history up to the present date of this remarkable undertaking.

Technical information about the line

Next in order I propose to give some details about the construction, the material, the resources, and the *personnel* of the Transcaspian Railway. More minute information upon these points can be obtained from either of two publications which have appeared abroad. The first is a brochure of 160 pages, entitled 'Transkaspien und seine Eisenbahn,' published at Hanover in 1888, and written by Dr. O. Heyfelder, who was surgeon-in-chief to Skobeleff's expedition in 1880, and has since been chief of the medical staff to General Annenkoff's battalions. This book is, as one might expect of the writer, whom I had the good fortune to meet in Transcaspia, a capable and excellent production, distinguished by scientific as well as local knowledge, and by broad sympathies. The second publication is in the shape of two articles which were contributed by M. Edgar

Boulangier, a French engineer, to the 'Revue du Génie Militaire,' at Paris, in March–June 1887. This gentleman visited the line while in course of construction, was treated with characteristic friendliness by the Russian officials, and on his return wrote the reports to which I allude, and which are marked by technical accuracy and diligent observation. It is to be regretted that the temptations of authorship subsequently persuaded him to dilute and reproduce his original compositions in the form of a discursive volume, entitled 'Voyage à Merv,' published in 1888. To both these writers I am indebted for many facts and figures, verified and sometimes corrected by personal investigation, and supplemented by private inquiries on the spot.

Exclusively military character

In the first place, it must be borne in mind that the railway has been in its execution and is in its immediate object a military railway; and that all the labour which we associate at home with co-operative industry or private effort has here been undertaken by an official department, under the control of the War Minister at St. Petersburg. To us who in England are not only unacquainted with military railways, but even (except in such cases as India) with Government railways, the idea may appear a strange one. But in a world where anybody who is not an official is a nobody, and where military officials are at the head of the hierarchy of powers, it is less surprising. Not only was the construction of the line entrusted to a lieutenant-general (General Annenkoff having since been reappointed

for two years director-in-chief of the railway), but the technical and, to a large extent, the manual labour was in military hands. The same may be said of the working staff at this moment. Civilians have been and still are employed as surveyors, architects, and engineers; but the bulk of the staff is composed of soldiers of the line. The engines are in many cases driven by soldiers; the station-masters are officers, or veterans who have been wounded in battle; and the guards, conductors, ticket-collectors, and pointsmen, as well as the telegraph and post-office clerks attached to the stations, are soldiers also. It cannot be doubted that this peculiarity contributed much to the economy of original construction, just as it has since done to the efficiency of daily administration.

Material of the line

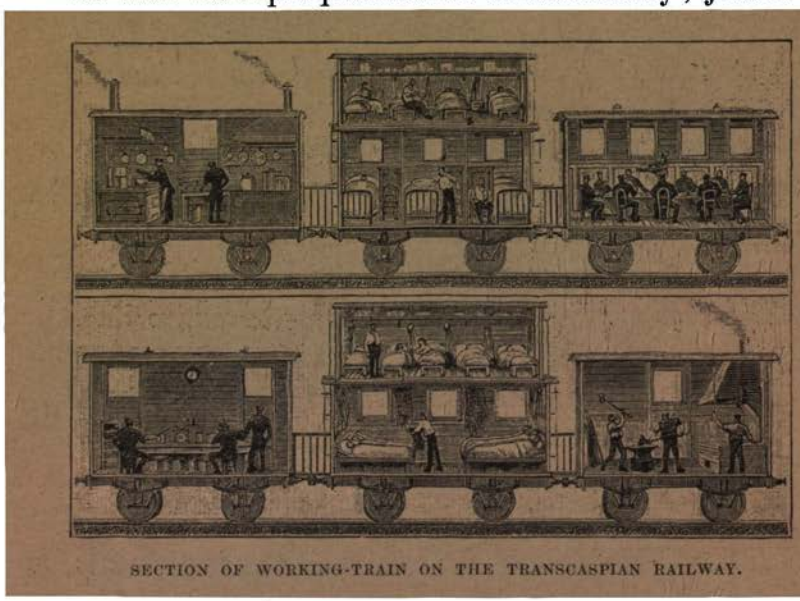
The line itself is on a five-foot gauge, which is uniform with the railway system of European Russia, but not with that of British India. The rails, which are all of steel, were made, partly in St. Petersburg, partly in Southern Russia, and were bought by the Government at rather high prices in order to encourage native manufacture. They are from 19 to 22 feet long, and are laid upon wooden sleepers, at the rate of 2,000 sleepers for every mile, being simply spiked down, after the universal Russian fashion, without chairs or bolts. Every single piece of timber, iron, or steel employed was brought from the forests or workshops of Russia, for the most part down the Volga and across the Caspian. The sleepers cost 8*d.* apiece in Russia, 3*s.* upon delivery in Transcaspia.

The line is a single one from start to finish, except at the stations, where there are invariably sidings, and sometimes triangles, for an engine to reverse; and is laid upon a low earthwork or embankment thrown up with the soil scooped out of a shallow trench on either side. The permanent way is not metalled. Stone for the railway buildings, particularly sandstone, was found in great quantity in the quarries of the Persian mountains. Bricks were in some cases collected from the ruined cities and villages that everywhere abound, in others were sun-dried or baked in kilns.

Character and pay of workmen

Two railway battalions of from 1,000 to 1,500 men each were employed on the works. The first of these, which laid the rails to Kizil Arvat in 1881, and whose headquarters are still at the latter place, has since been engaged in the service of the entire line. The second—which was specially recruited in 1885 from many regiments, men being chosen with individual aptitudes for the work—has laid the long stretch of rails to Samarkand. The unskilled labour was performed by natives, chiefly Turkomans, Persians, and Bokhariots, who used their own implements and tools, and of whom at one time over 20,000 were employed. They made the earthworks, cuttings and embankments, while the soldiers followed behind them, placing and spiking down the rails. The common soldier's pay was from 10*s.* to 1*l.* a month; the engineer's from 4*l.* to 10*l.* The wages of the native workmen varied according to the demand for labour (there never being any lack of supply), and rose gradually from 4*d.* a day to 7*d.* and even 8*d.* One of the

employés told me that the Turkomans were the best labourers, better than the Bokhariots, and much better than the Persians. The latter are as strong as oxen, but are incurably idle and very cowardly. No doubt the employment of the natives in the construction of the line, and the security they thereby enjoyed of fair and regular pay, has had a great deal to do with the rapid pacification of the country; just as



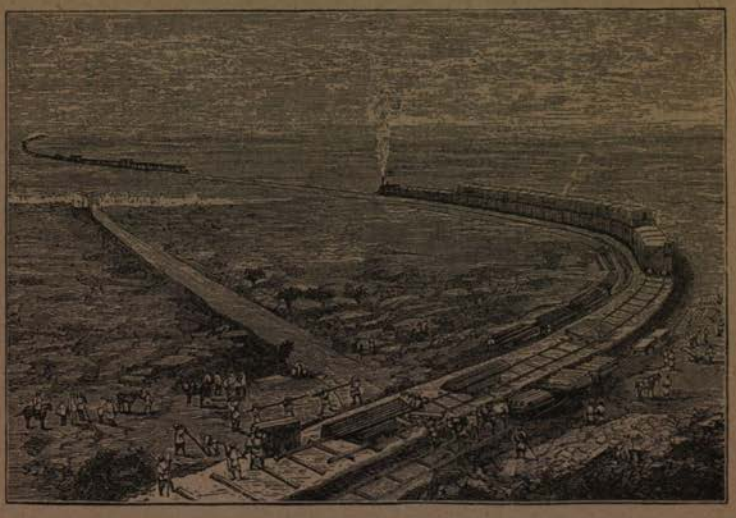
SECTION OF WORKING-TRAIN ON THE TRANSCASPIAN RAILWAY.

the employment of the Ghilzais and native tribesmen of the Beluchistan frontier, whom I saw engaged upon the Quetta railway early in 1888, has produced a most tranquillising effect in Pishin.

Method of construction

While the Russians were occupied in laying the railway, their local habitation was a working train, which moved forward with the line itself, and which contained, besides larder, kitchen, dining, ambulance,

smithy, and telegraph wagons, accommodation in two-storied carriages for 1,500 officers and men. The latter were divided into two brigades of equal number, who worked for six hours each out of the twenty-four, the one from 6 A.M. to noon, the other from noon to 6 P.M. Twice a day another train came up in the rear from the base, bringing food, water, material and rolling stock. The latter was conducted to the front



LAYING THE RAILS.

on a small movable narrow-gauge line three miles long which was temporarily laid alongside of the main rails, and which advanced in their company. I was told by the Colonel of the 2nd Railway Battalion that the maximum rate of advance was four miles in the day, and the normal rate over two; though in wind and rain it sometimes sank to half a mile, or less.

As regards the cost of the entire line I was pre- Cost

sented with slightly differing estimates; and there is no doubt that the latter part was executed more cheaply than the first. Striking an average, however, over the whole line, we may accept the following figures as approximately correct:—4,500*l.* a mile, all included; though as the rails and rolling stock, which amounted to about two-fifths of the entire cost, were supplied to General Annenkoff by Government order from Russian workshops, the charge actually incurred upon the spot did not amount to more than 2,700*l.* a mile. Irregular grants were however made from time to time for particular objects; and if these are included the total cost would be quite 5,000*l.* a mile, upon the former basis of calculation. A considerable additional expenditure has also been needed since for the repair or reconstruction of faulty work and for the unfinished platforms, stations, sheds, and buildings generally along the line, a credit of 200,000*l.* having been allowed to General Annenkoff for those purposes. It is difficult to distinguish between the cost of the line *per se*, and its cost *plus* these accessories. Nevertheless it is probably one of the cheapest railways that have ever been constructed.[1]

Facilities of construction

A few words as to the facilities and difficulties which were encountered, and the relative strength of which largely determined the cost of execution. It

[1] The *Gazette Russe* for February 1888 estimated the annual cost to the nation of the Transcaspian railway as at least 400,000*l.* But General Annenkoff claims to have reduced this sum by more than one half. The Council of the Empire has lately, however (July 1889), voted him a further sum of 600,000*l.* for the completion of the undertaking.

has frequently been claimed that this railway is an astonishing engineering phenomenon, almost a miracle, inasmuch as it traverses a country previously believed to be inaccessible to such a method of locomotion.[1] In opposition to this view I am tempted to affirm that except for the local dearth of material due to the appalling desolation of the country, it is the easiest and simplest railway that has ever been built. The region which it penetrates is as flat as a billiard table for almost the entire distance, the steepest gradient met with being only 1 in 150. There was, therefore, apart from the greater facility of construction, no difficulty in transporting heavy wagons and bringing up long and loaded trains. There are no tunnels, and only a few insignificant cuttings in the sandhills. Sometimes the rails run in a bee line for 20 or 25 miles without the slightest deviation to right or left. In a country for the most part destitute of water, it is not surprising to find that over a distance of 900 miles only three bridges were required, across the Tejend, across the Murghab at Merv, and across the Amu Daria—the latter a very considerable work—beyond Tcharjui.[2] The speed which might be attained on a line possessing such advantages ought to be very great; but the far from solid character of the substructure has hitherto prevented anything beyond a maximum of 30 miles an hour, while the average

[1] The Russian writer, I. Y. Vatslik, sums up his account of the enterprise in these words: 'Thus was this Titanic work gloriously brought to an end by this indefatigable hero' (*i.e.* Annenkoff.)

[2] I speak of bridges of any size or importance. There are fifty-six bridges in all, if we include those over ditches and dry water-courses.

speed is from 10 to 20, according to the character of the region traversed. In time of war, when heavily charged trains would be following each other in swift succession to the front, a higher average than 12 or 15 miles could not reasonably be counted upon. These—in addition to the pacific attitude of the inhabitants, who have been thoroughly cowed since Geok Tepe, the abundance and cheapness of labour, the absence of contractors, and, lastly, what every one admits to have been the indomitable energy and excellent management of General Annenkoff—have been the main advantages enjoyed by the Russians.

Difficulties of water

On the other hand must be set the difficulties of the route, arising in the main from two causes —the scarcity of water and the plethora of sand. If in many parts a slight exchange could have been effected of these two commodities, much labour might have been spared, and many hearts would still be gladdened. For the first 110 miles from Uzun Ada there is no sweet water at all,[1] the first source of drinkable water being in the tiny oasis of Kazanjik, whither it has been brought in pipes from a reservoir filled by a mountain stream. The latter affords a type of the main, though a very precarious source of supply; for whilst during half the year the torrent-beds are empty, from time to time there rushes down a cataract that sweeps all before it, tearing up the rails, and

[1] At the stations of Molla Kari, Bala Ishem, and Aidin there is a little water; but it is precarious in quantity, brackish in taste, and barely drinkable.

converting the desert into a lagoon. One such catastrophe occurred at the opening ceremony, and delayed General Annenkoff's guests many weary hours near Kizil Arvat. But these incidents are fortunately rare. To meet the scanty supplies, the distillation of seawater was originally resorted to, and condensing machines were established at Uzun Ada and Michaelovsk. But latterly the plan has been more favoured of conveying the water from places where it exists to those where it does not in great wooden vats, standing upon platform trucks; and these too may often be seen permanently planted at the various stations. Artesian wells were bored at first, but have resulted in complete failure. A more scientific use is now being made of water brought in conduits or pipes from the mountains, and filling the stationary cisterns by its own pressure; of natural sources and springs, and of canalisation. In the sand-dunes between Merv and Tcharjui, the water is conducted to the line by subterranean galleries, like the Afghan *karezes*, leading from the wells. The scarcity of water would, however, be a serious consideration in the event of the transport of large bodies of troops and baggage animals in time of war, unless this occurred at a season when the natural sources were full.

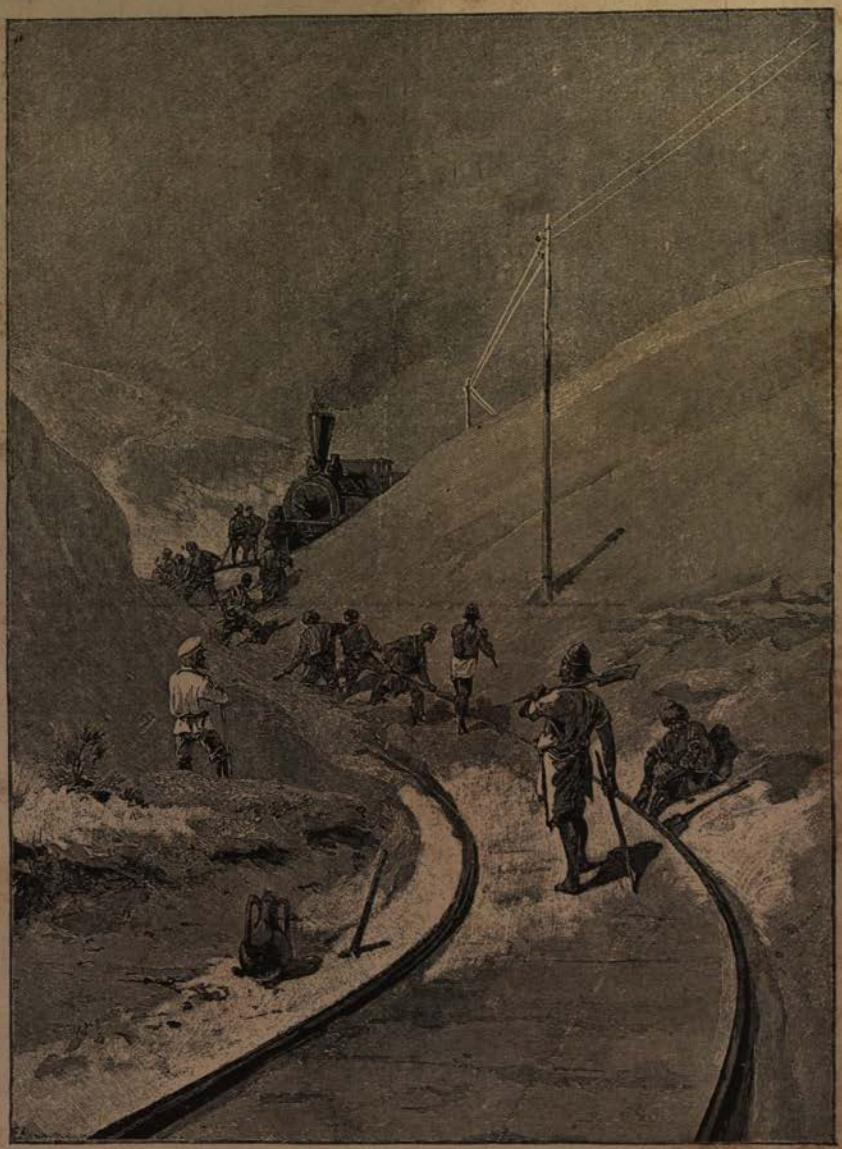
Difficulties of sand

A greater difficulty presented itself in the shape —perhaps I might almost say, in the shapelessness—of the vast and shifting desert sands. Of the 650 miles, which are covered by the railway, between the Caspian and the Amu Daria, 200 at least are through a howling wilderness. This

may be divided into three main sections: (1) the first thirty miles from the Caspian; (2) the stretch between the Merv Oasis and the Oxus; and (3) a narrow belt between the Oxus and Bokhara. Here but little vegetation is either visible, or, with certain exceptions, possible. The sand, of the most brilliant yellow hue, is piled in loose hillocks and mobile dunes, and is swept hither and thither by powerful winds. It has all the appearance of a sea of troubled waves, billow succeeding billow in melancholy succession, with the sand driving like spray from their summits, and great smooth-swept troughs lying between, on which the winds leave the imprint of their fingers in wavy indentations, just like an ebb-tide on the sea-shore. These were the conditions that presented the only really formidable obstacle to the military engineer.

Contrivances to resist the sands

Several methods were employed of resisting this insidious and implacable enemy. Near the Caspian the permanent way was soaked with sea-water to give it consistency, the rapid evaporation of the climate speedily solidifying the surface; in other parts it was covered over with a sort of armour-plating of clay. This prevented the earthwork from being swept away, and the sleepers laid bare. Elsewhere, and in the more desolate regions, other plans were adopted. The sandhills contiguous to the line were planted with tamarisk, wild oats, and desert shrubs, nurseries for which were started in the Persian mountains; or with that strange and interesting denizen of the wilderness, the



CLEARING AWAY THE SAND

saxaoul,[1] which, with a scanty and often shabby uppergrowth, strikes its sturdy roots deep down into the sand, and somehow or other derives sustenance from that to which it gives stability and permanence. Fascines of the branches of this plant were also cut, laid at right angles to the rails, along the outer edge of the earthwork or embankment, and packed down under a layer of sand. On the tops of the dunes may often be seen half-buried wooden palisades, 3 ft. or 4 ft. high, constructed of light laths, and planted perpendicularly to resist the prevailing winds, which by piling up the sand against them, arrest its further progress. These were copied from the fencing employed to resist the snowdrifts in the steppes of Southern Russia. In spite of all these precautions the sand continues and must always continue to be a serious peril to the line, and when the hurricanes blow, which are common at certain seasons of the year, the rails in the regions I have indicated will always be liable to be blocked, and can only be kept clear by relief parties of workmen sweeping the deposit away as fast as it accumulates.

A third difficulty, in the total absence of coal and (with the exception of the *saxaoul*, which

Difficulty of fuel and lighting

[1] The Saxaoul (*haloxylon ammodendron*), called *zak* by the Mongols further East, is the most widely distributed of the sand-flora of Central Asia. It is met with on the shores of the sea, and at an elevation of 10,000 feet, and from the Caspian to China. Growing to a height of sometimes twelve or fifteen feet, and with a thickness near the root of half a foot or more, it is used by man for fuel, and by camels for food, the former burning the stumps and branches, which ignite like coal, and give a great heat, while the latter munch the stems and twigs.

was too valuable to be permanently sacrificed) of firewood, was the heating of the engines, and in a less degree the lighting and warming of the stations, telegraph offices, and trains. Here it was at first thought that other local resources might prove sufficient. Naphtha was found in the hills of Naphtha Dagh and Buja Dagh near the Caspian, and the narrow-gauge Décauville railway, which has been spoken of, was opportunely utilised to run from the station of Bala Ishem to these springs. Their produce has since turned out to be either unremunerative or inadequate; and the residual naphtha, or *astakti*, being the refuse left over from petroleum after distillation, by which the locomotives are driven, is now purchased from the prolific oil-fields of Baku. The tenders for the year 1889 specified the total amount required as 6,000,000 gallons. Large reservoirs of this naphtha are kept at the superior stations, the tank at Askabad containing 80,000 gallons; and it is transported along the line in cistern-cars, holding 2,400 gallons each. In dwelling-houses the nuisance arising from the smoke of *astakti* has been corrected by the use of the Nikitkin apparatus. 'When I add that the economy of petroleum is six times that of coal, as burned upon European railways, and that it possesses twofold the efficiency in generating steam, it will be seen that Nature, if she has stinted her assistance to the Russians in other respects, has here bestowed it with no ungenerous hand. Petroleum is also consumed in large quantities in lamps, in the form of kerosene oil.

Rolling-stock of the railway

About the rolling-stock of the new railway I found it very difficult to gain precise information. It is, indeed, as hard to extract accurate statistics or calculations from a Russian as to squeeze juice from a peachstone. In this respect he is at the opposite pole of character from the American, who inundates you in the railway carriage with a torrent of figures demonstrating to a nicety the latest transactions of the business market of his native town, the number of trains that run per diem through its railway station, or, as he prefers to call it, depôt, or the income in dollars and cents of its most reputable citizens. Dr. Heyfelder in his work gives the number of locomotives on the first section of the line to Amu Daria as 84, on the second to Samarkand as 26, total 110; the total number of freight cars as 1,240, and of platform cars as 570. M. Mestcherin's figures were respectively 90, 1,200, and 600, no great disparity. But on the line itself, whereas I was told by one of the employés that there were only 66 engines in all, 48 on the first section and 18 on the second (though 20 more had been ordered), and 600 wagons, 300 of each sort, elsewhere I heard from another official that there were 150 locomotives on the first section of the line and 28 on the second, and over 1,000 wagons. I fancy that all these calculations omit the passenger wagons proper, which are at present rather a secondary consideration, many of them being only baggage wagons with windows cut in the side, and seats introduced down the middle. Of first-class carriages there is only one, which is

reserved for the use of the inspector of the line, but which was courteously placed at the disposal of our party upon landing at Uzun Ada. We were also accommodated with one of the best second-class carriages, which was brand new, and six of which have recently been ordered in Russia at a cost of 6,000 roubles, or 600*l.*, each. They consist of a large wagon built in the foreign fashion, with two separate compartments containing two long seats or couches each, and with four similar compartments opening on to a gangway which runs down the side throughout and conducts to a lavatory and cabinet at either end. More comfortable carriages I never travelled in. The old two-storied wagons, which are still running, will shortly be discontinued, because of the heavy strain they impose on the line.

There are, further, 120 wooden tank cars conveying water or naphtha, and occasionally attached to the trains, so as to make them independent of the stations. General Annenkoff's calculation was that he ought to have 12 pairs of trains running on each section with 45 wagons each. As the line becomes developed there will doubtless be a considerable increase in the rolling-stock, which from my own observation I should say approached to the lower rather than to the higher figure. Of engine sheds I saw but few on the more recent part of the line, though it is part of the scheme to provide them at most of the stations.

Stations

These are of a widely different character, graduating from substantial structures in brick and stone to

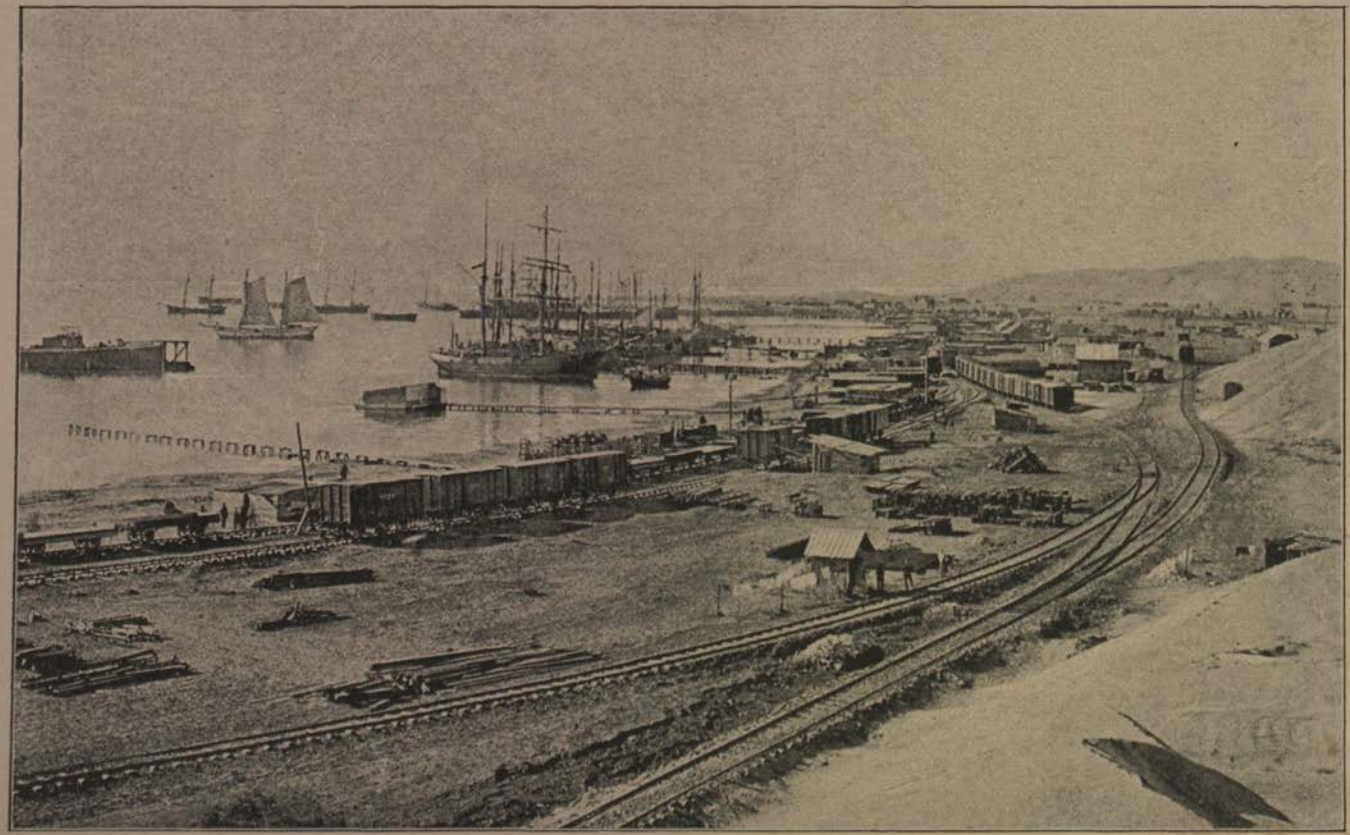
dingy wooden shanties, half buried in the sand. There are 61 in all, 45 between Uzun Ada and Amu Daria, and 16 between Amu Daria and Samarkand; and their average distance apart is therefore 15 miles.[1] Five of them, Askabad, Merv, Amu Daria, Bokhara, and Samarkand, are ranked as first-class stations; the first only is so far complete, but imposing fabrics of brick and stone are rising from the ground on the other sites. Of the second-class stations there are three—Uzun Ada, Michaelovsk, and Kizil Arvat. Of the third-class four, and all the rest of the fourth. A fully equipped station is to consist of the station and its offices—a guest house (analogous to the Indian Dak Bungalow), a telegraph office, a station-master's house, and the quarters for the employés. Those that have already been raised consist of single-storied buildings made either of stone or of sun-baked bricks plastered over with lime, with stone copings and mouldings; and all have flat roofs smeared with asphalt from the petroleum wells. The pattern is a very neat and practical one, and was furnished by a young German engineer named Urlaub. It is perhaps worth while mentioning that the commissariat arrangements are on the whole decidedly good. The train stops at least half or three-quarters of an hour for a mid-day and an evening meal, which are excellently provided in the railway stations, while there are constant and almost irritating pauses of from five to twenty minutes, which can be sustained by the consumption of first-rate tea at 1*d.* a glass,

[1] Vide the List of Stations in the 'Appendix.'

of superb melons at less than 1*d.* each, and of grapes at a fraction of a farthing a bunch. Some of the trains are furnished with refreshment cars, but I did not happen to travel by one of these.

Duration and cost of journey

Finally I may add that regular trains run daily from the Caspian to the Oxus, though the steamboat service with Baku is only bi-weekly either way; and twice a week, at present, from the Oxus to Samarkand. The entire journey from Uzun Ada to Samarkand without a break occupies 72 hours, or three days and nights, for 900 miles, *i.e.* an average of about 12 miles an hour including halts. The cost of a second-class through ticket is 38 roubles, or 3*l.* 16*s.*, *i.e.* at the rate of only 1*d.* per mile. Travelling, therefore, is cheap, though hardly expeditious.



LANDING-PLACE AND TERMINUS OF UZUN ADA

CHAPTER IV

FROM THE CASPIAN TO MERV

To Margiana from the Hyrcanian cliffs
Of Caucasus, and dark Iberian dales.
MILTON, *Paradise Regained*, 317.

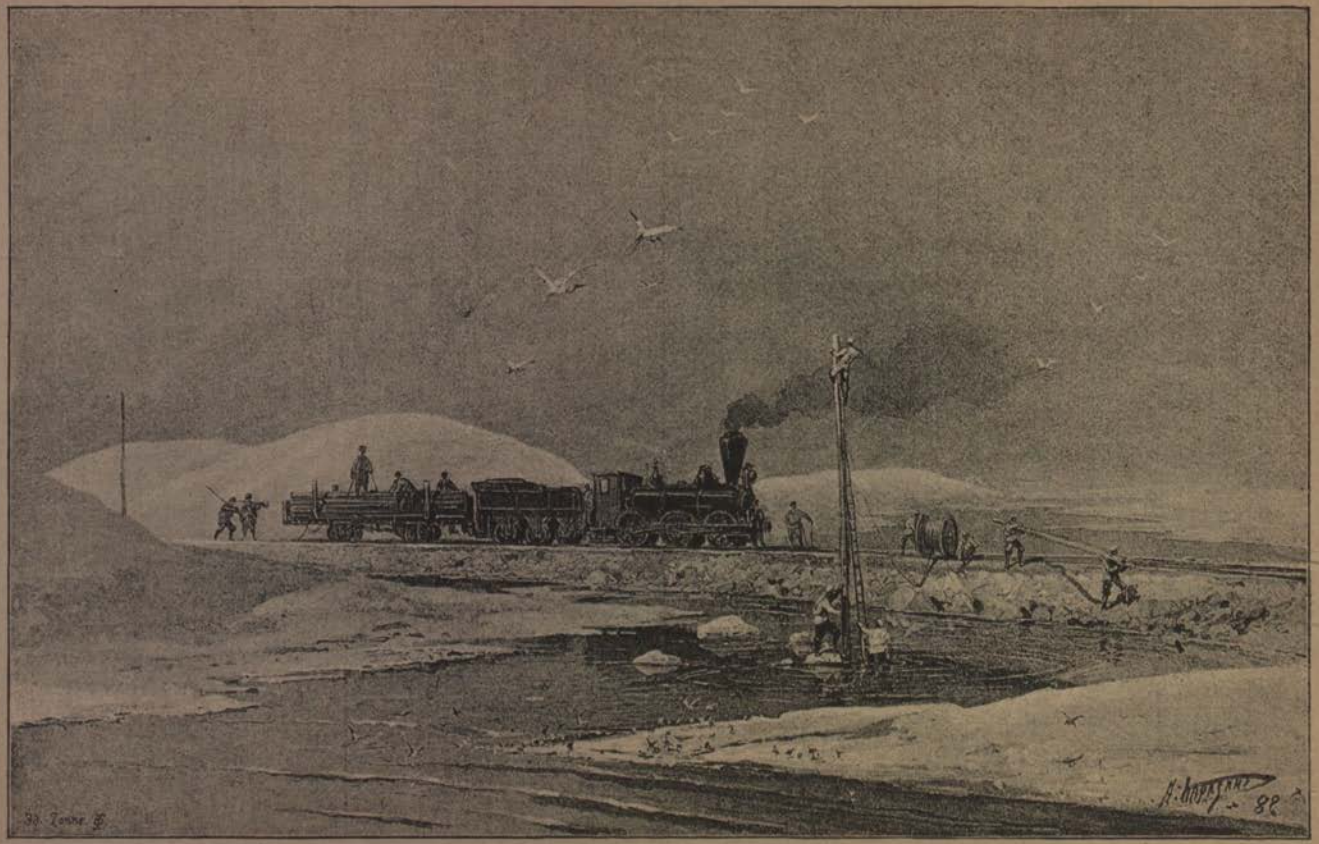
Uzun Ada, present and future—Start from Uzun Ada—Character of the scenery—The Persian mountains—The desert of Kara Kum—The four oases—Vegetation of the oases—The Akhal-Tekke oasis—Statistics of its resources—The desert landscape—Variations of climate—Geok Tepe, the old Turkoman fortress—Story of the siege of Geok Tepe—Preparations for assault—Assault and capture, January 24, 1881—Pursuit and massacre of the Turkomans—Impression left upon the conquered—Skobeleff and the massacre—His principle of warfare—Character of Skobeleff—His marvellous courage—His caprice—Idiosyncrasies—Anecdotes of his whims—Story of the Persian Khan—Final criticism—Turkoman peasants—Askabad—Government of Transcaspia—Resources and taxation—Buildings of the town—Strategical importance of Askabad and roads into Persia—Use of the railway by pilgrims to Meshed and Mecca—The Atek oasis and Dushak—Refusal of permission to visit Kelat and Meshed—Kelat-i-Nadiri—The Tejend oasis.

Uzun Ada, present and future

FROM the technical details dealt with in the preceding chapter, I now pass to a record of my journey and the experiences that it involved. At the point where my narrative was interrupted, it had brought my fellow-travellers and myself to the eastern shore of the Caspian. Uzun Ada, where we landed, and which was made the western terminus of the railway in August 1886, is certainly not an attractive or inspiring

spot, though it perhaps hardly deserves the savage abuse with which it has been assailed, any more than it does the laudatory exaggeration of French and Russian scribes. The word means Long Island, and the town is accordingly built on a low and straggling islet of sand, the yellow of which glitters fiercely between the opposite blues of sky and sea. There is not a blade of grass or a drop of water to be seen, and the heat in the summer months must be appalling. The town consists of a number of small wooden houses and shops (children must be born and exist at Uzun Ada, because I actually saw a toy shop) reared in a promiscuous fashion on the sand, which is elsewhere covered with sheds, warehouses, and other large wooden buildings.

Most of the houses arrived, ready made, in numbered blocks, from Astrakhan, where they had cost 60*l.* apiece. A freight charge of 12*l.*, and a further 3*l.* for the expenses of erection, raised the actual figure to 75*l.* each. The more important buildings were constructed upon the spot with material brought from Russia. I could see the reservoir and engine-house where the condensation of seawater is effected; and though the bulk of the water supply arrives by train every day from the interior, I observed signs that these artificial agencies were still in use. The piers were loaded with bales of cotton and other merchandise, and a good deal of business appeared to be going on. Uzun Ada is, however, though preferable to Michaelovsk, a very unsatisfactory anchorage; for it contains only from 10 to 12 feet of water, and is



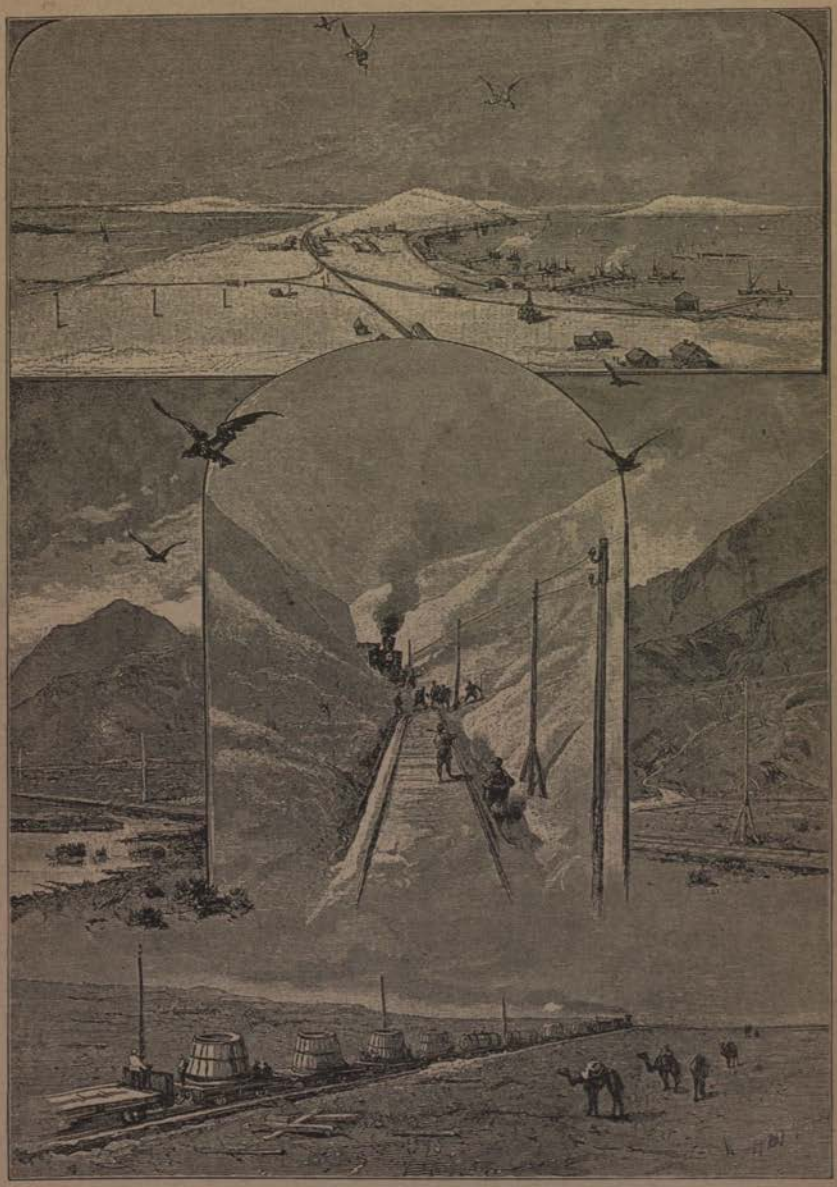
FIXING THE TELEGRAPH-WIRES NEAR UZUN ADA.

constantly silting up, the channel requiring to be kept open by dredges; whilst in winter the bay is sometimes thickly frozen over and quite inaccessible to navigation. It is not surprising therefore to hear that a commission has sat and reported in favour of moving the landing-place to the old harbour of Krasnovodsk, 80 miles to the north, where the greater distance is compensated by an ample depth of water and by excellent facilities for disembarkation. As soon as the line begins to pay its way, we may expect to see the removal effected. The flimsy and ephemeral character of the present town, which only numbers about 800 inhabitants, will then be seen to have harmonised both with its sudden and mechanical origin and with its abrupt demise; and Uzun Ada will vanish from existence, unwept and unhonoured, if not altogether unsung.[1]

Start from Uzun Ada

The railway station is at the distance of a few hundred yards from the landing-stage; and the traveller ploughs his way to the platform (which does not exist) through an ankle-depth of sand. Four hours are allowed for an exhaustive inspection of the

[1] The relative merits of the two *termini*, and the question of removal, were ably discussed by M. Sémènoff, vice-president of the Russian Imperial Geographical Society, in the Proceedings of that Society for 1888 (vol. xxiv.). He described Krasnovodsk as providing a better, more convenient, safer, and deeper anchorage. Neither of the two places contain supplies of fresh water sufficient to feed the engines; though near Krasnovodsk is a source that meets the drinking requirements of the small total of inhabitants (700). On the other hand, Uzun Ada is recommended by the money that has already been sunk there, by its greater nearness to Askabad, and, as a consequence, by the greater cheapness of transport. The question, in M. Sémènoff's opinion, will be mainly determined by the relative cost of debarkation at the two places.



UZUN ADA, THE SAND-DUNES, THE KOPET DAGH, AND THE KARA KUM.

local features, or are more probably intended as a tribute to the possible delays of the Caspian. Finally the train starts, crosses a long embankment of 1,300 yards, by which the islet is united to the mainland, and plunges into the sullen dunes of the desert.

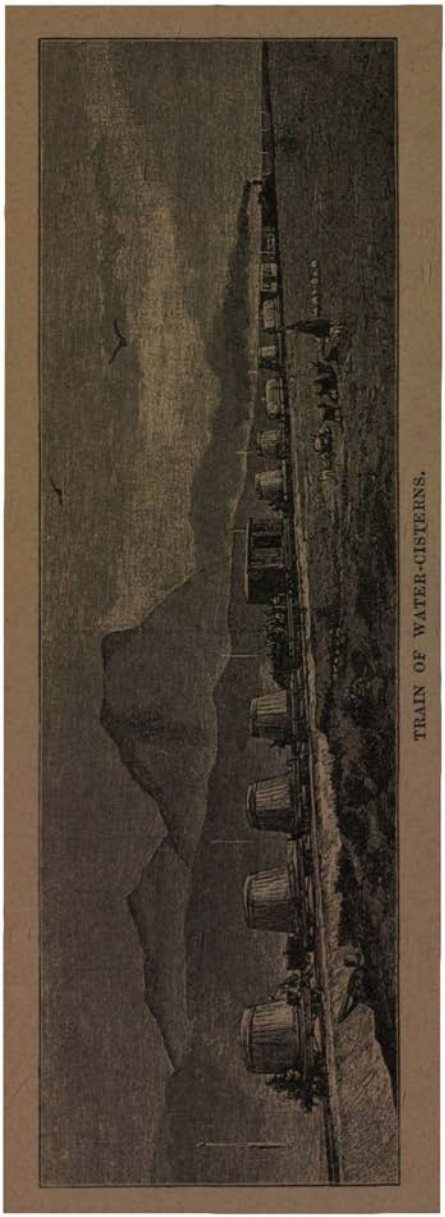
Character of the scenery. The Persian mountains

I have in the preceding chapter described the main features of the first 30 miles from the Caspian. A funereal tale of destruction, both to man and beast, engulfed in their whirling crests, might these cruel sand-waves tell; and the bones of many a victim lie trampled fathoms deep under the pitiless tide. The peaks of the great Balkan range on the north, rising in points to a height of 5,000 ft., afford a welcome relief to the eye, and, after a wide depression in the surface level, through which the Oxus or one of its confluents once disembogued into the Caspian, are succeeded by the inferior elevation of the Little Balkans on the south. These are presently merged in the splendid barrier of the Persian mountains, which, first under the name of the Kuren Dagh, with an average height of 1,500 to 2,000 ft., and later on, while the elevation increases, as the Kopet Dagh, rising to 5,000 and 6,000 ft. and even higher, overhang the railway, with an axis inclined from north-west to south-east, for nearly 300 miles, till their southern spurs are confounded in the mountains of Gulistan. On their far side, just over the summit, runs the Persian frontier, which was fixed by the treaty with Russia in December 1881, and has been demarcated by commissioners since. Very grand and impressive these mountains are, with an outline ever

original and new, and with grey flanks scoured by deep oval gullies, either torn by the irresistible action of water or representing the depressions between the immemorial geological folds of the mountains as they emerged from the superincumbent sea. One is the more inclined to the former view from the recent experience of the railway itself, which has twice during the last three months been bodily swept away for some distance by one of these terrific rushes, descending from the hills after a sudden storm.

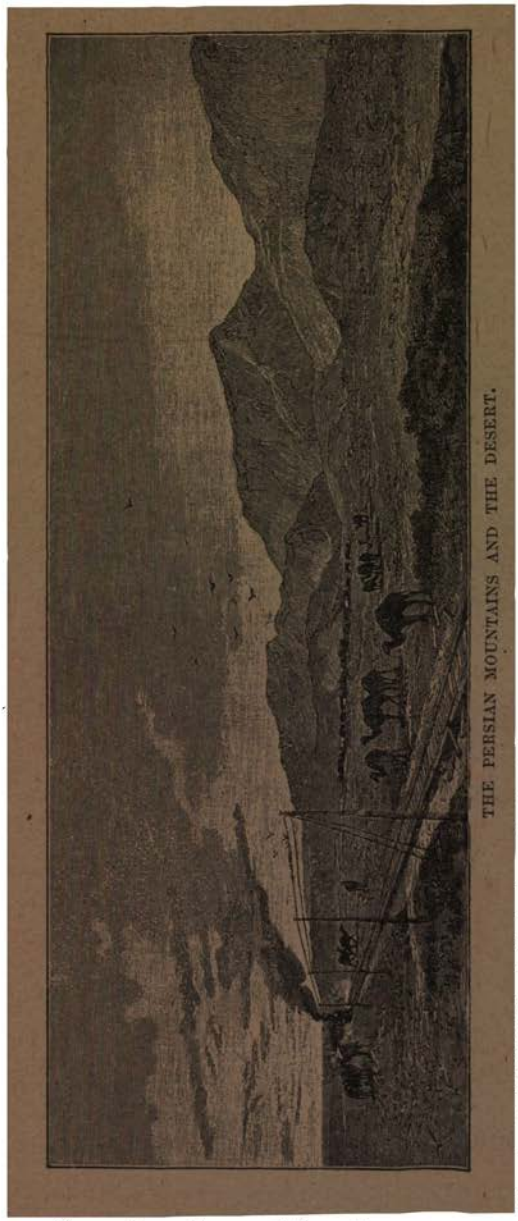
The Desert of Kara Kum

If the mountains on the south supply a perpetual variety of shape and summit, there is a more than equivalent monotony in the spectacle that extends as far as the eye can reach to the north. Here nothing is visible but a wide and doleful plain, wholly destitute, or all but destitute, of vegetation, and sweeping with unbroken uniformity to a blurred horizon. This desert is the famous Kara Kum or Black Sand, which, with intervals of dunes and interruptions of so-called oases, stretches from the Caspian to the Oxus, and from Khorasan to Khiva and the Aral Sea. Originally part of the old Aralo-Caspian basin, it has, partly by an upheaval of surface, partly by the action of air-currents, been converted into an utter wilderness. In its worst parts, and they are at first the more frequent, it consists of a perfectly level expanse, plastered over with marl, which is cracked and blistered by the sun, and is covered with a thin top-dressing of saline crystallisation. So hard is the surface in dry weather that a camel will barely leave the impression of its footmark, and that the torrents



TRAIN OF WATER-CISTERNS.

from the mountains, unable to penetrate the crust, lie outspread in lakes and pools. That this sorrowful waste was once at the bottom of the sea is proved by the numerous specimens of Aralo-Caspian Mollusc fauna that have been found imbedded in the sand; but I do not suppose that their value would induce even the most austere pupil of science to veto a proposal, were such within the bounds of possibility, for the resumption of the *status quo ante* on its part. The desiccated gulfs and channels which in some portions furrow its surface, after supplying an innocent pastime to a generation of theorists, are now generally understood to mark, not former beds of the Oxus, but



THE PERSIAN MOUNTAINS AND THE DESERT.

the ancient shore-line of a much larger Caspian.

The four oases

At intervals this desert is broken by belts of more or less cultivable soil, which, under the modest standards of so barren a country, are dignified by the name of oases. There are four such oases between Uzun Ada and the Oxus, viz. those of Akhal, Atek (or the mountain base), Tejend, and Merv. An oasis in these parts has no relation to the *a priori* picture, painted by our imagination, in which rivulets of water course through a wealth of verdure beneath umbrageous trees. It is simply

a designation for such portions of the desert as have been reclaimed, by moisture naturally or artificially supplied, for the service of man; the extent of their fertility depending entirely upon the poverty or abundance of the streams. Geologically their surface consists of a layer of alluvial soil, which has been washed down by rain and snow from the easily disintegrated face of the mountains, and has formed a deposit along the base. In places the fertility has been increased by the natural action of the later geological periods.

Vegetation of the oases

There is a good deal of variety in the vegetation of these oases. In the more sterile parts they seem to support little but a stunted growth of tamarisk, absinthe, camelthorn, and light desert shrubs; though even here in the spring-time there is a sudden and magical efflorescence of bright prairie flowers. With the torrid summer heats these swiftly fade and die, and the abomination of desolation then sets in. Elsewhere, under the influence of a richer water supply, barley, rice, maize, millet, sorghum, and lucerne are succeeded in the most fertile districts by orchards and gardens, which produce an amazing crop of melons, apricots, peaches, and grapes.

The Akhal-Tekke oasis

Kizil Arvat, the original terminus of the railway, which is the first important place we reach, and which has 2,000 inhabitants, and, what is even more remarkable, a fountain playing at the station, is commonly described as marking the beginning of the Akhal oasis, the belt of country inhabited by that tough race of brigands, whose long career of raid and pillage was summarily extinguished at Geok

Tepe by Skobeleff in 1881. Of this oasis, which extends for a length of between 150 and 200 miles with varying fertility, the Turkomans have a proverb that says: 'Adam when driven forth from Eden never found a finer place for settlement than Akhal'; a boast, the vanity of which is not untempered with discretion, seeing that it stops short of the assertion that he ever *did* settle there. For this unexpected modesty the traveller in a strange country may well feel grateful.

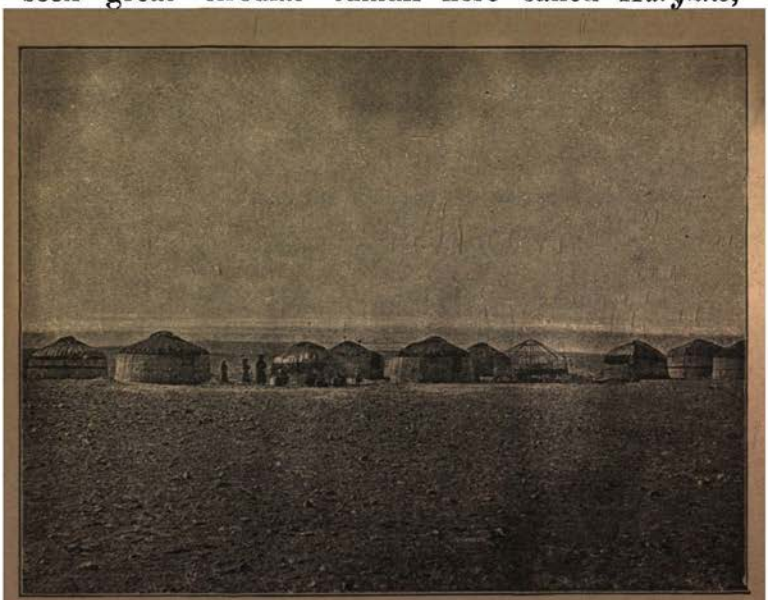
Statistics of its resources

The latest figures relating to the Akhal Tekke oasis, which I derive from a report by M. Baieff, who was sent by the Russian Minister of Finance in 1887 to enquire into the boundary districts of Persia, Turkomania, and Afghanistan, are as follows. He reported the oasis to contain 7,904 kibitkas, with a population of 32,990 natives, as well as 1,700 others, differently housed. The animal wealth of the oasis was returned thus: 11,760 camels, 2,500 horses, 150,900 sheep, and 1,600 other cattle. In the light of what I shall have to say later about the Turkoman militia, it is interesting to note that he reported the superior breed of Turkoman horses to have become almost extinct since the war.

The desert landscape

Through an entire day we traversed this plain, the features of which become positively fatiguing in their shameless uniformity. Clustered here and there are to be seen the kibitkas or circular tents of the Turkomans, who have been tempted back to their old hunting-grounds. But these, which represent the peaceful life of the present, cannot be compared

in number with the small clay watch-towers, dotted about like pepper-pots all over the expanse, and the rectangular walled forts and enclosures with towers at the corners, which recall the fierce unsettled existence, the dreaded *alamans* or raids, and the turbulent manners of the past. Occasionally are to be seen great circular tumuli here called *Kurgans*,



TURKOMAN KIBITKAS.

which are supposed either to be the milestones of forgotten nomad advance or the cemeteries of the still more forgotten dead. Some are circular and others oval in shape; they are sometimes 40 or 50 feet high, with steep sides, and a circumference at the base of 200 or 300 yards. Ever and anon a solitary sand-column, raised by a passing puff of air, starts up, and giddily revolving on its fragile axis whirls

away over the plain. This spectacle extends to the northern horizon, where it is lost in the mirage which is prevalent in these parts, and the liquid tremulous medium of which transforms the featureless dismal plain into luscious lakes of water with floating islets of trees. Often were the soldiers of Skobeleff's brigades deceived and disappointed by this never-stale conjuring trick of the desert; and the oldest traveller would probably confess to having succumbed to its ever-green illusion.

Variations of climate

Among the remarkable features of this tract of country, none is more extraordinary than the variations of climate, which in their violent extremes are out of all proportion to the latitude in which it lies, the same as that of Smyrna, of Lisbon, and of San Francisco. In summer the heat is that of a seven times heated furnace, and the scanty water-sources are insufficient to sustain life. The winter cold is sometimes Arctic; entire herds of cattle are frozen to death in the steppes; a deep snow covers the ground to the depth of two or three feet; and many human lives are lost in the storms. The past winter (1888–9), for instance, has been one of uncommon severity: the thermometer registered 20 degrees (Réaumur) of frost; water was sold along the railway at 2*s*. a pailful; and the needs of fuel have wrought shocking havoc among the rapidly dwindling supplies of the Saxaoul. These climatic vicissitudes render campaigning in any but the spring and autumn months of the year a very precarious venture, and might abruptly suspend the most successful

military operations. The campaign of Geok Tepe could not have reached so speedy and favourable an issue but for the abnormal mildness of the winter of 1880–1, when the stars in their courses fought for Skobeleff.

Geok Tepe, the old Turkoman fortress

We passed Bahmi, a place once of some little importance, and at 2.30 on the afternoon of the day after leaving the Caspian stopped at the station of Geok Tepe, about sixty yards from the mouldering ruins of the famous Tekke fortress. Looking out of the window beforehand, we had already caught sight of the western face of the great rampart, and of a small fort outside where were trees and some mills worked by the Tekkes during the siege with the aid of the stream that entered the encampment from this quarter. Towering above the outer wall we could also see in the north-western corner a lofty mound, which was used as a post of observation and as a battery by the besieged. The entire enclosure, which is still fairly perfect, measured 2 miles 1,275 yards in circuit, and the walls of rammed clay—though crumbling to ruin and though stripped of their upper half immediately after the capture in order to cover the bodies of the thousands of slain—are still on the average about twelve feet high. In their face are to be seen the holes scooped out by the shells which imbedded themselves uselessly in the earthy mass; and on the side running parallel with the line are still the two breaches on either side of the S.E. angle which were created by the Russian mines. In the centre is the main exit, masked by an outer fortifica-

tion, from which the impetuous sallies were made that four times swept down like a tornado upon the Russian camp. The latter was to the south of the site now occupied by the station, and between it and the mountains, from the top of one of which, on January 24, 1881, Edmund O'Donovan, striving to push his way to Skobeleff's army, and reaching the crest at the critical moment, looked down as from a balloon upon the distant assault, and watched through his field-glass the crowd of fugitives as they streamed in the agony of flight across the plain. I have always thought this one of the most dramatic incidents of modern history. Clambering up the ruined bank, I found that it consisted of a double wall the whole way round, or rather of a single wall of enormous breadth, between the lofty battlements of which on the top was a place where men were placed to fire at the besiegers, and where, when the fortress was stormed, many of them were found sitting as they had been shot perhaps days before, with their bodies pierced by bullets, and their heads fallen forward between their knees.[1] The bones of

[1] General Grodekoff in his work (chaps. xiv., xv.), supplies the following details of the Turkoman fortress. It was a quadrilateral enclosure, its north and south sides measuring respectively 980 and 560 yards, its eastern and western faces 1,680 and 1,575 yards. The wall consisted of an earthen rampart, 35 feet thick at the base, and from 21 to 28 feet thick at the top, and 15 feet high, thrown up and trodden hard by men and horses, and then covered with a 5-feet coating of mud. On the top of the wall were an inner and an outer parapet 4½ feet high, and respectively 2¼ and 3 feet thick, with a large number of traverses, designed to prolong the defence, even against an enemy who had penetrated to the interior. In the outer parapet loopholes were cut 9 inches wide, at a distance of 3½ feet apart. All round the outside was a ditch, with varying depth of from 6 to 9 feet, and breadth

camels, and sometimes of men, may still be seen lying within the desolate enclosure; and for long after the assault and capture, it was impossible to ride over the plain without the horse-hoofs crushing into human skulls. Visiting this interesting spot in the company of an eye-witness of the siege, who was brought into frequent personal contact with the Commander-in-Chief, I was made acquainted with details about the storming of the fortress, as well as about the personality of the extraordinary man who conducted it, that have not found their way into the works dealing with either subject.

Story of the siege of Geok Tepe

The main incidents of the siege and capture of Geok Tepe are well known, and may be read in the official report of General Skobeleff, which was translated into English, and published in this country in 1881.[1] In March, 1880, Skobeleff was appointed to the chief command. Having made a preliminary reconnaissance of the Turkoman position in July of the same year, he retired to the Caspian, completed his preparations there, and in December returned with about 7,000 men and over 60 guns to invest the

of from 12 to 17 feet; the scarp and counterscarp being almost perpendicular, and rifle-pits and steps being dug in places out of the latter. In the inside, at the foot of the wall, was also a trench, 42 feet broad, but only from 1 foot to 2¼ feet in depth. There were 21 gates or openings in the walls, masked by large semicircular traverses outside, the ditch being crossed by dykes. A branch from the Sakiz-Yeb stream was conducted into the fort through one of these openings, and having been separated into two channels, passed out again. A broad open space ran down the centre of the enclosure, but in the remaining area it was calculated that there were pitched 13,000 kibitkas.

[1] *Siege and Assault of Denghil Tepe.* By General Skobeleff (translated). London, 1881.

fortress, the correct name of which was Denghil Tepe, Geok Tepe being the title of a small settlement a little further in the desert. Having first cleared the Turkomans out of the fortified redoubt of Yenghi Kala at the foot of the cliffs, he pitched his own camp there at a distance of a mile from the main position at Denghil Tepe, within which were gathered, under the command of Makdum Kuli Khan and his general, Tekme Sirdar, since dead, the flower of the Akhal Tekkes, with their wives and families—some 35,000 persons, assisted by 10,000 horsemen. Between the 1st and the 24th of January, a first, a second, and finally a third parallel of siege works were laid; enfilading batteries were erected to rake the interior of the fort; four desperate sallies of the besieged, made under cover of darkness, were successfully repelled; and the Russian lines were steadily pushed forward till at last they were so close that the Russian officers walking to and from the council tent were fired at, that lights were forbidden at night because they attracted a hail of bullets, and that wounded men in the ambulance tents were shot again as they lay. Some of the troops were in the trenches, where also Skobeleff's tent was pitched; he courted every risk himself, and was never so gratified as when he heard that his officers had been in serious danger and under fire. When the Russians began to dig their mines for the final assault, their advanced redoubt was only 70 yards from the Tekke ramparts, and the troops in the foremost trenches could actually hear the Turkomans talking together

on the walls, and wondering what their opponents were doing, poking their snouts like pigs into the ground. Russian sentinels on the watch-towers frequently overheard the discussions and ejaculations of the besieged, and reported to the general the waning spirit of the defence. Nevertheless the Tekkes fought with amazing desperation and courage. They would creep out from the fort at night, crawl over the sand, lying motionless perhaps for hours in the same position, and finally steal the Russian rifles, piled right under the noses of the sentinels, and glide stealthily away.

Preparations for assault

On the 20th of January, breaching operations commenced, and part of the wall was knocked down by artillery, but was as quickly repaired by the besieged. Finally the two mines, easterly and westerly, were ready; the former was charged with over a ton of gunpowder; and at 1 A.M. on the morning of the 24th, Lieutenant Ostolopoff and Naval Cadet Meyer [1] volunteered to carry a charge of gun-cotton to the walls and explode it in the western breach which had already been battered open by the cannon fire. This feat was successfully performed. Meyer was shot by a bullet through the face, but ultimately recovered, and with the aid of an artificial palate can still speak.

Assault and capture, Jan. 24, 1881

On the morning of the 24th the troops were in position at 6 A.M. The attacking force was divided into three columns, under Colonels Kuropatkin,

[1] Upon the recommendation of General Gloukhovskoe a Naval Brigade had originally been summoned from Cronstadt to attempt the navigation of the Atrek. When this proved a failure the sailors and their officers were sent on to the front.

Kozelkoff, and Haidaroff, advancing two from the south, and one from the west. At 7 A.M. the breaching battery reopened fire with thirty-six guns upon the old breach and soon knocked it down again, the shells crashing through the aperture into the densely packed interior, where they wrought fearful destruction. At 11.20 the gunpowder mine was sprung on the S.E. face; a prodigious column of mingled dust and smoke shot high into the air, and, falling, disclosed a yawning cavity fifty yards wide. At the same instant the soldiers of the two main storming columns, shouting 'hurrah,' rushed at the gap, where a terrific hand-to-hand fight was waged with bayonet, lance, and sword. Reserves came up from the rear, with bands playing, drums beating, and colours flying, to support the attack.

Simultaneously, the third column, with the aid of scaling ladders, stormed the western face of the fort. Inside was to be seen a sea of tents and a panic-stricken but desperate crowd. From the opposite direction thousands of fugitives streamed out on to the plain; but all through the day more resolute spirits, concealed in huts or holes inside the enclosure, continued to start out and fire at the victorious enemy. Boulangier, in his book, speaking of the assault, says, 'At this solemn moment Skobeleff shone so splendidly in the eyes of his men, that he seemed to their imagination to be a type of the god of war.' As a matter of fact it was rather difficult either for Skobeleff to shine on this occasion, or for his men to see him; for he took no part in the attack himself,

but, as a prudent general should, directed the operations from the rear. Boulangier's phrase was based on a misunderstanding of an account which Dr. Heyfelder had given him of a mimic repetition of the assault which Skobeleff ordered a few weeks later for the entertainment of a distinguished Persian khan, and which he led with boyish enthusiasm himself. Within less than an hour of the assault, the three columns had joined ranks inside the fort; and in close formation, with massed bands, advanced to the hill of Denghil Tepe, from which at 1 P.M. the two-headed eagle, fluttering in the breeze, proclaimed a Russian victory.

Pursuit and massacre of the Turkomans

Then ensued the least creditable episode of the entire campaign. At 4 in the afternoon Skobeleff led his cavalry through the breach and ordered both horse and foot to pursue the retreating enemy and to give no quarter. This command was obeyed with savage precision by both till darkness fell—by the infantry (six companies) for a distance of seven miles, by the cavalry (a division of dragoons and four *sotnias* of Cossacks) for eleven miles, supported by a battery of horse artillery with long range guns. Eight thousand persons of both sexes and all ages were mercilessly cut down and slain. 'On the morning after the battle they lay in rows like freshly mown hay, as they had been swept down by the mitrailleuses and cannon.' In the fort were found the corpses of 6,500 men, and some thousands of living women and children. There too, in General Grode-

koff's own words, 'all who had not succeeded in escaping were killed to a man by the Russian soldiers, the only males spared being the Persian prisoners, who were easily recognised by the fetters on their legs, and of whom there were about 600 in all. After that only women and children, to the number of about 5,000, were left.' The troops were allowed to loot without interruption for four days, and booty to the value of 600,000*l.* was found inside the fortress. In the operations of the day the Russian loss was only 60 killed and 340 wounded; during the entire campaign 283 killed and 689 wounded. Within the same time Skobeleff admitted that he must have destroyed 20,000 of the enemy.

It was not a rout, but a massacre; not a defeat, but extirpation; and it is not surprising that after this drastic lesson, the Tekkes of the Akhal oasis have never lifted a little finger against their conquerors.

Impression left upon the conquered

An incident related to me in Transcaspia afforded an interesting corroboration of the immeasurable effect that was produced upon the inhabitants by this disastrous day. I have already narrated that the Russian columns advanced to the assault with drums beating and bands playing, a favourite plan of Skobeleff's whenever he attacked. Five years later, when the railway was opened to Askabad, and in the course of the inaugural ceremonies the Russian military music began to play, the Turkoman women and children raised woful cries of lamentation, and the

men threw themselves on the ground with their foreheads in the dust.[1]

Skobeleff and the massacre

For the horrible carnage that followed upon the capture of Geok Tepe, Skobeleff and the Russians cannot escape reproach. The former, though generous and merciful towards his own men, had no pity for an enemy. To an utter contempt for human life he joined a physical excitement on the battlefield, by which his followers as well as himself were transported. It was written of him that 'he rode to battle clad in white, decked with orders, scented and curled, like a bridegroom to a wedding, his eyes gleaming with wild delight, his voice tremulous with joyous excitement.' War was to him the highest expression of human force; and in action he seemed to acquire a perfect lust for blood. The Turkomans called him *Guenz Kanli*, or Bloody Eyes, and his presence inspired them with a superstitious terror. When organising his forces before the campaign he particularly requested that no officers with humanitarian ideas should be sent to the front. In a letter to the chief of the staff of the Caucasus Military District he wrote as follows:—

[1] Compare with this the account given by General Grodekoff (chap. xv.) of an incident that occurred during the siege on January 8, the night of the grand sortie. 'Both bodies of Turkoman troops were close to the Kala (*i.e.* fortified redoubt) when suddenly music burst forth from the trenches, and the Tekkes at once hastened to retire into the fortress. This music, it appeared, exercised a most depressing influence upon the Turkomans, and one which they could not shake off. It forced the Ishans (*i.e.* priests) to pray, and caused universal terror; for whenever the music played they imagined the Russians were advancing to the assault.'

The hard necessities of war are everywhere alike, and the steps taken by Lomakin (in September 1879) require no justification. There is no doubt as to this in my own mind, or as to the soldier being permitted to have no opinions of his own in such matters, and being solely obliged to obey orders. I must ask you, for the good of the service, and for the sake of the duty entrusted to me, only to send me officers whose sole idea is their duty, and who do not entertain visionary sentiments.[1]

After Geok Tepe had fallen and the rout was over, he remarked: 'How unutterably bored I am, there is nothing left to do.' His own cruelty was not shared by many of his men, who, when the fight was over, might be seen walking about, holding the little fatherless Tekke children by the hand. I have narrated or revived these incidents, because, repellent though they be to nineteenth-century notions, and discreditable to the Russian character, they do not stand alone in the history of Russian Conquest in Central Asia,[2] but are profoundly characteristic of the methods of warfare by which that race has consistently and successfully set about the subjugation of Oriental peoples.

His principle of warfare

Skobeleff himself candidly expressed it as follows: 'I hold it as a principle that in Asia the duration of peace is in direct proportion to the slaughter you inflict upon the enemy. The harder you hit them the longer they will be quiet afterwards. My system

[1] Grodekoff, chap. xvi.

[2] Compare the massacre of the Yomud Turkomans at Kizil Takir by General Kaufmann after the fall of Khiva in 1873, and General Lomakin's bombardment of Tekke women and children at Denghil Tepe in 1879.

is this: To strike hard, and keep on hitting till resistance is completely over; then at once to form ranks, cease slaughter, and be kind and humane to the prostrate enemy.' A greater contrast than this can scarcely be imagined to the British method, which is to strike gingerly a series of taps, rather than a downright blow; rigidly to prohibit all pillage or slaughter, and to abstain not less wholly from subsequent fraternisation. But there can be no doubt that the Russian tactics, however deficient they may be from the moral, are exceedingly effective from the practical point of view; and that an Oriental people in particular, on whose memory has been stamped the print of some such terrible disaster, are disposed to recognise in the heavy hand of the conqueror the all-powerful will of God, and to pass at once from furious antagonism to peaceful and even friendly submission.

Character of Skobeleff. His marvellous courage

Of Skobeleff's character and nature many stories are still told by those who were brought into contact with him in this campaign.[1] He was one of those rare spirits who, like Napoleon, exercised a magnetic influence over other men, and the mere sight of whose white uniform, flashing like the plume of Henry of Navarre, electrified his troops on the field of combat. A hundred exploits testify to his mag-

[1] The criticism of Skobeleff's character is my own, and has not been borrowed from any one source; certainly not, as some of the Russian papers seemed to imagine in noticing my original articles, from Dr. Heyfelder, who never spoke to me of the general without affection and respect, or of the Russians generally without admiration.

nificent courage and insensibility to danger. He had only twice been wounded in his life, and frequently declared, 'The bullet does not exist that can strike me down.' On one occasion, before Geok Tepe, he was leisurely surveying the fortress amid a storm of bullets, when the staff-surgeon joined him. 'This is no place for you,' said Skobeleff, 'I order you to go.' The surgeon protested that by the general's side he considered himself safe. 'I am invulnerable,' was the reply, 'but if you do not go, well, I will immediately put you under arrest.' The surgeon having retired, Skobeleff then took a seat, and calmly sat down to continue his observations amid the fire of the enemy.

His caprice

In the Turkoman campaign he declined to allow any newspaper correspondents with his force—a decision but for which poor O'Donovan would probably never have had either the temptation or the opportunity to strike out for Merv—and did not have a single newspaper sent after him to the front. As a commander, though severe upon others, he set a most dangerous example himself, for he knew no discipline, and just as he had disobeyed the commands of his superior officers in the Turkish war, so he neglected the orders of the Emperor in the Turkoman campaign. Nevertheless, a general at thirty, and a popular idol when he succumbed to a discreditable end at the early age of thirty-eight, it is impossible to say if he had lived what he might not have done or have become.

Idiosyncrasies.

His private character was more eccentric still—a

curious jumble of nobility and meanness, of manly attributes, and of childish temper. At one time he was bold, imperious, inspired; at another, querulous and morose; now sanguine, now despondent, changing his mood, like a chameleon its colour, half a dozen times in the day. Even his friends were made the victims of these Protean transformations, being alternately treated with affection and contempt. The transition would be reflected in his countenance, which was now beautiful, now ugly, and in his physical condition, which oscillated between masculine vigour and nervous exhaustion. After Geok Tepe he was ill for some weeks, and, though always on horseback, yet after a long ride he would return so prostrated that he almost fell from his saddle, and had to retire to his bed for days. He was a magnificent figure mounted, and was proud of his horses, which were always white or grey, as he had a passion for that colour, and even forgave a personal enemy who with true diplomacy presented him with a fine white charger bought for the purpose in Moscow. But his horses were not safer from his incurable caprice than were his friends. For when on one occasion after the fall of Geok Tepe the grey Persian which he was riding into the fort refused to cross the little canal that flowed into the camp, he gave it away at once, and never mounted it again. His unscrupulousness is well illustrated by the episode with which he commenced his public career. Then a young officer of hussars in Turkestan, and burning for distinction, he presented a report to Kaufmann, the Governor-General,

upon the successful suppression of a horde of brigands on the Bokharan frontier, in which he claimed to have killed over forty of the bandits. The whole thing subsequently turned out to be a myth, there being no brigands at all.[1]

Anecdotes of his whims

Two anecdotes I heard in Transcaspia which afford not a bad illustration of his wayward and ill-balanced nature. After the fall of Geok Tepe, a Russian general arrived from the Grand Duke Michael, at that time Governor-General of the Caucasus, to inspect the camp and troops, and to make a report. This officer, General Pavloff by name, had originally been appointed, after the death of General Petrusevitch, to replace Skobeleff, if the latter were killed; but arriving at Krasnovodsk on the very day of the fall of Geok Tepe, he was instructed to proceed in order to discuss with the Commander-in-Chief the future settlement of the oasis. Skobeleff was very angry indeed, because this officer, though of inferior military rank to himself (he having been promoted for the affair of Geok Tepe), would yet take precedence of him on this occasion as the representative of the Grand Duke. Accordingly he did his best to shirk a meeting altogether, and was infuriated when, the general having fallen ill at Bahmi, he was at length compelled to go and meet him, and above all to go in a carriage, a thing which he had never before done in time of war. The general proposed that they should both retire to Krasnovodsk to discuss the

[1] Vide *Autobiographical Sketches*, by Vassili Verestchagin (translated). 1887, vol. ii. p. 257.

question of decorations, &c. Then the patience of Skobeleff broke down, or rather his unscrupulous resourcefulness came in. A telegram suddenly arrived with the news that 6,000 Tekkes were advancing from Merv. It was, of course, impossible for him to proceed to Krasnovodsk; he must return at once to the camp. Orders were given for an expedition to be prepared; the medical staff was required to get ready; and some regiments which were to leave for Russia on the next day, and had made all their preparations for departure, were countermanded at the last moment. Meanwhile the luckless general, who was the *fons et origo mali*, had retired alone to the Caspian. When he was well off the scene of action Skobeleff's cheerfulness revived. 'Let us wait a little,' he said; 'possibly the telegram may not be true.' And sure enough another telegram soon followed saying that it was not 6,000 but 600 Tekkes who were on the way, and that they were coming, not to attack the Russian camp, but to seek their families and friends. The curious thing was, not that the trick succeeded, but that every soldier in the force knew that it had been played by Skobeleff, and admired him none the less.

Story of the Persian Khan

A few weeks after the storming of Geok Tepe, a distinguished Persian Khan, the Governor or Ilkhani of Kuchan, whose full name was Shuja ud Daulat Amir Hussein Khan, rode into the camp with an escort of 300 Persians to congratulate Skobeleff on his victory. The latter, who was in a pet, and did not want to be bored with entertainment, his thoughts

being centred in an advance upon Merv, had already ridden off to Lutfabad, leaving his guest to the care of his staff. The eminent Persian was very much offended at this want of respect, and speaking at a banquet said that he had come to compliment the Russian commander, but as the commander was not forthcoming he must depart. An aide-de-camp at once galloped off with this ultimatum to Skobeleff, who presently turned up much against his will, and organised for the Khan the mimic assault to which I have before alluded. In the evening a dinner was given in his honour. The meal, however, had hardly commenced when an officer arrived from St. Petersburg, bringing a decoration for Skobeleff and despatches from the Emperor. Hastily deserting his place by the Khan, with the feigned excuse of feeling a draught, Skobeleff commissioned an officer of inferior rank to fill his seat, while he himself moved to a place lower down to chat with the new arrival from St. Petersburg. Presently the Khan, being very much insulted, rose and said 'Good-night.' Skobeleff then made excuses for his breach of manners, but, remembering the draught, found himself unable to return to the head of the table. The story, which I heard from an eye-witness, is interesting only as an illustration of his whimsical and petulant temper.

Final criticism

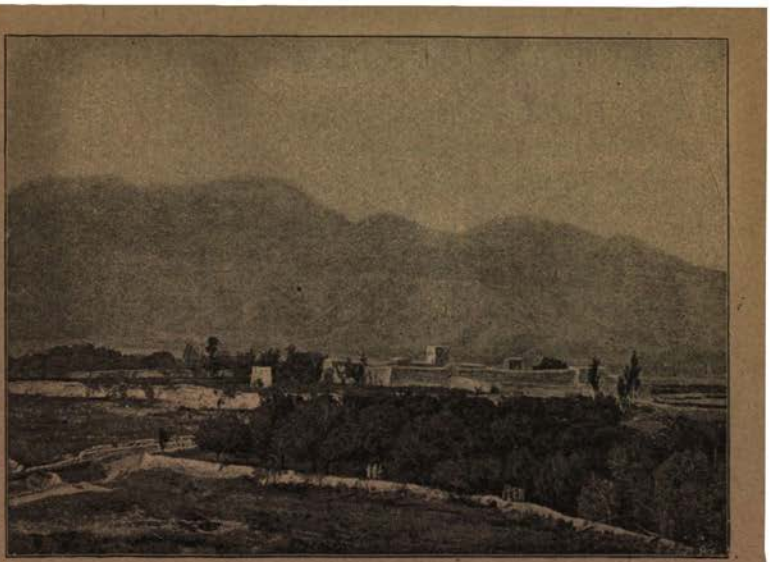
If we were to sum up his character—and I have laid stress upon it, as that of the only really commanding personality whom the history of Russian advance in Central Asia has produced—we might conclude that, though a greatly gifted, Skobeleff was not a great

man, being deficient in stability, in principle, and in faith. In many respects his character was typical of the Russian nation, in its present phase of development, with one foot, so to speak, planted in a barbarian past, while the other is advancing into a new world of ideas and action. To many it will seem that he died in a happy hour, both for his country, which might have suffered from his insensate levity and passion for war, and for himself, seeing that his reputation, which a premature death has now enshrined in legend, might not have permanently survived the touchstone of truth. Russian writers are very sensitive indeed of criticism upon one who was both a political idol and the darling of the army. But foreigners are, perhaps, better able than his own countrymen to ascertain the true perspective of this meteoric phenomenon. They may confess, what the ardour of a patriot might tempt him to conceal, that the light which it shed, though often dazzling, was sometimes lurid.

Turkoman peasants

Between Geok Tepe and the capital, Askabad, a distance of about twenty-eight miles, the railway passes through a country of more extensive cultivation and greater fertility. Tending their flocks, or riding on horses or asses, are to be seen numerous Turkomans, father and son sometimes bestriding the same animal. In these peaceful and unimposing rustics, who would divine the erewhile scourge and man-hunter of the desert? Clad in his dilapidated cotton dressing-gown or *khalat*, and with a huge brown sheepskin bonnet, almost as big as a grenadier's

bearskin, overshadowing his dusky features, he does not perhaps look like a civilised being, but still less would you take him for a converted Dick Turpin or Claude Duval. Excellent agriculturists these ancient moss-troopers are said to be, and now that the heyday of licence and war and plunder has faded into a dream, they settle down to a peasant's exis-



TURKOMAN VILLAGE AND ORCHARDS.

tence with as much contentment as they formerly leaped to saddle for a foray on the frontiers of Khorasan.

Askabad

Askabad, which we next reach, has all the appearance of a large and flourishing place. Its station is of European proportions and appointment. Numbers of droshkies attend the arrival of the trains; and the crowded platform indicates a considerable population.

I was informed that the present figures are 10,000; but these, which I believe to be an exaggerated estimate, include the troops, of which there are three rifle battalions and a regiment of Cossacks in or near the town; while two batteries of artillery are, I believe, stationed further south, at Arman Sagait. Askabad is the residence of the Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief (the two functions in a military *régime* being united in the same individual), and the administrative centre of Transcaspia. The present Governor is General Komaroff,[1] a man whose name is well known to Englishmen as the Russian commander in the famous affair on the Kushk, on March 30, 1885, which we have named from the contiguous and disputed district of Penjdeh. Into the question at issue between him and Sir Peter Lumsden I do not wish to re-enter. I afterwards met General Komaroff, and enjoyed an interesting conversation with him, to which I shall have occasion further to allude. He is a short, stout, middle-aged man, with a bald head, spectacles, and a square grizzled beard, and cannot be described as of dignified appearance. Indeed he reminded me of a university professor dressed up in uniform, and metamorphosed from a civilian into a soldier. To administrative energy he adds the tastes of a student and the enthusiasm of an antiquarian; having, as he

[1] Alexander Komaroff was born in 1830, entered the army at the age of nineteen, being gazetted to the Imperial Guard, was sent to the Caucasus in 1855, served under General Mouravieff at Kars, was subsequently appointed Governor of Derbent and chief of the military administration of the native tribes of the Caucasus; was made a Lieutenant-General in 1877, and Governor-General of Transcaspia in 1883.

informed me, amassed a collection of the antiquities of Transcaspia, including a statuette, apparently of Athene, of the best Greek period, some ornaments in the style of the beautiful Kertch collection at St. Petersburg, and no less than forty specimens of coins not previously known.

Government of Transcaspia

The Government of Transcaspia has, during the last five years, reached such dimensions that rumours have been heard of its approaching declaration of independence of the Caucasus, by the Governor-General of which it is still controlled; while a short time ago General Komaroff is said to have defeated a scheme to render it subordinate to the Governor-General of Turkestan, hitherto the greatest potentate of Central Asia, and to have sought from the Emperor the privilege of responsibility to him alone. If subordination to the Caucasus is perpetuated, it will only be because of the easy and uninterrupted communication between Transcaspia and that part of the empire, in contrast to European Russia, and because in time of war the Caucasus would be the base from which reinforcements and supplies would naturally be drawn. If, on the other hand, it is placed under Turkestan, it will be because of the danger of divided military action in a region so critical as the Afghan border. In any case, the increasing importance of Transcaspia affords a striking illustration of a fact, to which I shall frequently revert, viz. the shifting from east to west of the centre of gravity in the Central Asian dominions of the Czar, with its consequent bearings, of incalculable importance, upon the relations

of Russia and Great Britain in the East. Transcaspia, with an inhabited area of 13,000 square geographical miles, now consists of three districts and two sub-districts, each governed by a colonel or lieutenant-colonel, viz. Mangishlak with its capital Fort Alexandrovsk on the Caspian, Krasnovodsk, Akhal Tekke with its capital Askabad, Tejend, and Merv. To these are added the two territories, administered by commissioners, of Yuletan and Sarakhs. Its population has been ludicrously exaggerated in all extant English works, and consists, according to the latest returns, of 311,000 persons (exclusive of the Russian army and administration), of whom the Turkomans of Merv number 110,000; and it includes all the four principal oases already named, besides the Atrek region which was joined to Akhal Tekke in 1886, and the minor oases inhabited by the Sarik and Salor Turkomans of Yuletan, Sarakhs, and Penjdeh. Of the entire population 83 per cent. are Turkomans, 14 per cent. Kirghiz (of the Mangishlak peninsula), and the remaining 3 per cent., or 9,000, Russians, Armenians, Persians, Jews, and Bokhariots.

Resources and taxation

In 1885 the wealth of Transcaspia in animals was computed as follows; 107,000 camels, 68,000 horses, 22,000 asses, 47,000 horned cattle, and 1,400,000 sheep. Of natural resources, 8,064 tons of salt were reported to have been extracted in the Krasnovodsk district, and 120,000 gallons of petroleum from the wells of Bala Ishem. In the same year, *i.e.*, before the extension of the Transcaspian Railway, the imports were roughly estimated at 300,000*l.*, the exports

at 77,300*l.*, figures which would be completely dwarfed by the present returns. In 1885, the following sums were said to have been raised in taxation: 91,000 roubles house-tax, or rather tent-tax, levied on each *kibitka*, 15,000 roubles customs or caravan-tax, 1,200 roubles house-tax levied in the cities. On the other hand, in 1887 the State and Land Taxes combined are said to have produced a revenue of 27,400*l.* from Transcaspia. These totals, again, supply an imperfect basis for more recent computations.

Buildings of the town

Askabad itself has a printing-press, a photographic establishment, and European shops and hotels. The houses are for the most part of one storey, and are freely bedaubed with white. A small fortified *enceinte* supplies a reminder of the days, not yet ten years gone by, when the Russians were strangers and suspects in the land. In the centre of the town is an obelisk erected in memory of the artillerymen who were killed in the siege and capture of Geok Tepe, and at its base are planted the Afghan guns which were captured in the skirmish on the Kushk. The town is a purely Russian settlement, though the business quarter has attracted a large number of Armenians, Persians, and Jews. City life is avoided by the Turkomans, who prefer the tented liberty of the steppe.

Strategical importance of Askabad and roads into Persia

Askabad is also a place of high strategical significance, as being the meeting-point of the Khivan and Persian roads. Already the north of Persia and Khorasan are pretty well at Russian mercy from a military point of view; though there is

some bravado in talking, as the Russians always do, of the Shah as a vassal, and of Persia as in a parallel plight to Bokhara or Khiva. Since the occupation of Transcaspia the Russians have rendered an advance still more easy by constructing a military road from 20 ft. to 24 ft. broad, and available for artillery, from Askabad over the Kopet Dagh to the Persian frontier, where at present it terminates abruptly at one of the frontier pillars placed by the Commission near the hamlet of Baz Girha. The distance is thirty miles from Askabad. At present there is nothing better than a mountain track, descending upon the other side to Kuchan and the high road to Meshed; a contrast which is due to the failure of the Persians to fulfil their part of the bargain, Russia having undertaken to construct the first section of the *chaussée* to the frontier, while the remaining portion of forty miles to Kuchan was to be laid by General Gasteiger Khan for the Government of the Shah. To this co-operate roadway was to be joined a steam tramway originally projected by a merchant named Nikolaieff, which was to cover the remaining 100 miles to Meshed, and, under the guise of commercial transit, to provide Russia with a private way of entry into Khorasan. There is reason to believe that, elated with its recent successes in the matter of a Russian consul at Meshed, the Imperial Government is urgently pressing for the execution of this project; and at any moment we may find that the centre of interest has shifted from the Afghan to the Persian frontier. This is a question of which I shall have something to say later on. In any case,

whether a future movement upon Khorasan be forcible or pacific, this road will without doubt afford the main and a most effective line of advance. Already it has been announced in the press that it is beginning to be used by Bokharan merchants, in connection with the caravan routes through Persia from the ports of Bender-Abbas or Bushire, for merchandise from India, in preference to the shorter but less safe and more costly routes through Afghanistan.[1]

Use of the railway by pilgrims to Meshed and Mecca

A politic act on the part of General Annenkoff was the issue of a proclamation pointing out the advantages of his railway, in connection with the Askabad-Kuchan road, to pilgrims of the Shiite persuasion, both from Western Persia and from the provinces of the Caucasus, desirous of reaching the sacred city of Meshed—advantages by which I was informed that they already profit in considerable numbers. Not that the orthodox Sunnite is without his equal consolations from the line. It is, in fact, becoming a popular method of locomotion, on the first part of the way to Mecca, for the devout *hadji* of Bokhara, Samarkand, and the still further east. Six thousand such pilgrims travelled upon it in 1887; and it was

[1] Vide the following extract from the journal of the Russian Ministry of Finance (No. 19, 1889): 'Some successful attempts have recently been made to introduce certain goods (chiefly green tea) from India into Bokhara by the roundabout way of Bender-Bushire, Persia, Askabad, and beyond by the Transcaspian railway. This route has been chosen by Bokharan merchants, according to the testimony of the chief official of the Bokharan Customs, in consequence of the facilities offered by the railway for the transport of goods, and also because merchandise brought thereby escapes the exorbitant transit dues imposed by the Afghans.'

estimated that the total would reach ten thousand in 1888.

The Atek oasis and Dushak

Among the stations passed after leaving Askabad are Gyaurs and Baba Durmaz, both of which were familiar names during the epoch when Russian diplomacy averred and British credulity believed that the limit of Russian advance could be drawn somewhere or anywhere between Askabad and Merv. The former is generally recognised as the commencement of the Atek or mountain-base oasis, in which horticulture and agriculture continue to prevail, and which is prolonged as far as the rich pastures of Sarakhs. The greater part of it was acquired by treaty with Persia in 1881. Artik, the next station to Baba Durmaz, is only a few miles from Lutfabad, a Persian town on the near side of the mountains, round which a loop was thrown, leaving it to Persia, in the delimitation that followed upon the treaty of that year. The oasis ends at Dushak, a place of considerable importance, inasmuch as it is the present southernmost station of the line, where the rails run nearest to Afghanistan, and the consequent starting-point for Sarakhs and the frontier at Zulfikar, from which it is distant only 130 miles. When any extension of the line in a southerly direction is contemplated—a subject of which I shall have more to say—it might possibly be from Dushak (a Persian name with the curiously apt signification of Two Branches) that it would start; and should the idea of an Indo-Russian railway ever emerge from the limbo of chimeras in which it is at present interned, it would be from Dushak that the

lines of junction with Chaman, Quetta, and the Bolan would most naturally be laid.

Some of my friends on our return journey contemplated making a little excursion from Dushak over the Persian frontier to the native Khanate of Kelat-i-Nadiri and possibly even as far as Meshed, a distance over very rough mountain road of eighty miles; but telegraphing to the Russian authorities at Askabad for permission to pass the frontier and to return by the same route, we were peremptorily forbidden, the officer who dictated the despatch subsequently informing me that the frontier was not safe in these parts, a murder having recently been committed there or thereabouts, and that the consent of the Persian authorities would have had to be obtained from Teheran, as well as a special authorisation from St. Petersburg—an accumulation of excuses which was hardly wanted to explain the refusal of the Russians to allow three Englishmen to visit so tenderly nursed a region as the frontiers of Khorasan. Kelat, indeed, is understood to be the point of the Persian frontier where Russian influence, and, it is alleged, Russian roubles, are most assiduously at work; and where the troubles and risk of future conquest are being anticipated by the surer methods of subsidised conciliation.

Refusal of permission to visit Kelat and Meshed

I should greatly like to have seen Kelat-i-Nadiri, which is a most interesting place, and of which more will be heard in the future. Visited, or mapped, or described, by Sir C. MacGregor ('Journey through Khorasan'), Colonel Valentine Baker ('Clouds in the

Kelat-i-Nadiri

East'), O'Donovan ('The Merv Oasis'), and Captain A. C. Yate ('Travels with the Afghan Boundary Commission'), it is known to be one of the strongest natural fortresses in the world. An elevated valley of intensely fertile soil, irrigated by a perennial stream, is entirely surrounded and shut out from external communication by a lofty mountain barrier, from 800 to 1,200 feet high, with a precipitous scarp from 300 to 600 feet. The cliffs are pierced by five passages, which are strongly fortified and impregnable to attack. The entire enclosure, which O'Donovan very aptly compared with the Happy Valley of Rasselas, and which is a kingdom in miniature, is twenty-one miles long and from five to seven miles broad. Its value to Russia lies in its command of the head-waters of the streams that irrigate the Atek. In the spring of this year (April 1889) it was rumoured that Kelat had been ceded by Persia to Russia; but enquiries very happily proved that this was not the case.

The Tejend oasis

From Dushak, where we finally lose sight of the great mountain wall, under the shadow of which we have continued so long, the railway turns at an angle towards the north-east and enters the Tejend oasis. Presently it crosses the river of that name, which is merely another title for the lower course of the Heri Rud, where it emerges from the mountains and meanders over the sandy plain (the oasis is a thing of the future rather than of the present) prior to losing itself in a marshy swamp in the Kara Kum. Among the rivers of this country, none present more striking contrasts, according to the season of the year, than the

Tejend. At time of high water, in April and May, it has a depth of forty feet, and a width, in different parts, of from eighty yards to a quarter of a mile. Later on, under the evaporation of the summer heats, it shrinks to a narrow streamlet, or is utterly exhausted by irrigation canals. The Tejend swamp is overgrown by a sort of cane-brake or jungle teeming with wild fowl and game of every description, particularly

TEKKE CHIEFS OF THE TEJEND OASIS.

wild boars. General Annenkoff's first bridge crosses the river at a point where it is from 80 to 100 yards wide. Then follow the sands again; for wherever water has not been conducted there is sand, and the meaning of an oasis in these parts is, as I have said, simply a steppe rendered amenable to culture by artificial irrigation, there being no reason why, if a more

abundant water supply could either be manipulated or procured, the whole country should not in time, if I may coin the word, be oasified. The sands continue for nearly fifty miles, till we again find ourselves in the midst of life and verdure, and on the early morning of our second day after leaving the Caspian glide into a station bearing the historic name of Merv.

CHAPTER V

FROM MERV TO THE OXUS

But I have seen
Afrasiab's cities only, Samarkand,
Bokhara, and lone Khiva in the waste,
And the black Toorkmun tents; and only drunk
The desert rivers, Moorghub and Tejend,
Kohik,[1] and where the Kalmuks feed their sheep,
The Northern Sir, and the great Oxus stream,
The yellow Oxus.

MATTHEW ARNOLD, *Sohrab and Rustăm.*

Appearance of the modern Merv—The Russian town—History of the ancient Merv—British travellers at Merv—Russian annexation in 1884—Fertility, resources, and population of the oasis—Administration, taxation, and irrigation—Trade returns—Future development of the oasis—Turkoman character—Strategical importance of Merv—Ferment on the Afghan frontier arising out of the revolt of Is-hak Khan—Movements of Is-hak and Abdurrahman—Colonel Alikhanoff, Governor of Merv—The Turkoman militia—Possible increase of the force—The Turkoman horses—The Khans of Merv at Baku—The ruined fortress of Koushid Khan Kala—Old cities of Merv—Emotions of the traveller—Central Asian scenery—The Sand-dunes again—Description of the ancients—Difficulties of the railway—The Oxus—Width and appearance of the channel—General Annenkoff's railway bridge—Its temporary character—The Oxus flotilla.

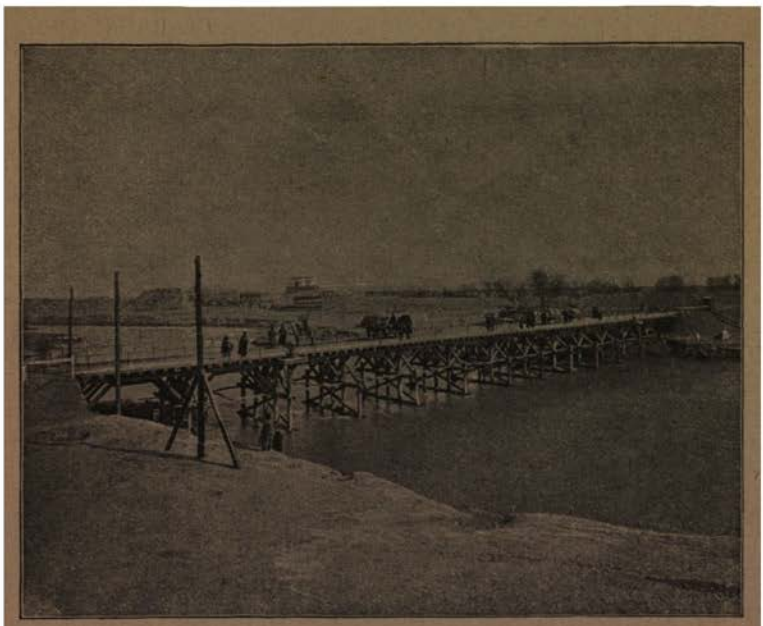
Appearance of the modern Merv

WHEN O'Donovan rode into Merv on March 1, 1881, after following on horseback much the same route from the Persian frontier as we have been doing by

[1] The Kohik is the modern Zerafshan, which waters Samarkand and Bokhara.

rail, he confessed to a sense of disappointment at finding the domes and minarets of the great city of his imagination dwindle into a couple of hundred huts, placed on the right bank of a scanty stream. The visitor of to-day, who, though he be, thanks to O'Donovan and others, better informed, yet still expects some halo of splendour to linger round the ancient Queen of the World, suffers an almost similar disenchantment. He sees only a nascent and as yet very embryonic Russian town, with some station buildings, two or three streets of irregular wooden houses, and of generally inchoate appearance, and that is all. No ancient city, no ruins, no signs of former greatness or reviving prosperity. It is true that on the other side of the Murghab—at the season of the year when I saw it a slender but very muddy stream, flowing in a deep bed between lofty banks, and here crossed by a wooden pile bridge, fifty-five yards long—he sees looming up the earthen walls of the unfinished fortress of Koushid Khan Kala, upon which the Mervi were so busily engaged during O'Donovan's stay in 1881. But these have to a large extent been pulled down or have fallen into decay; and the romance is not restored to them by the discovery that they now contain several unimpeachable whitewashed dwellings of European structure and appearance, which are in fact the Russian official quarters, and edifices, and comprise the residences of Colonel Alikhanoff, Governor of Merv, General Annenkoff, the colonel commanding the garrison, and others, as well as public gardens and a small Russian church.

The fact is that this Merv never was an important city, or even a city at all. It is merely a site, first occupied by the Tekke Turkomans when under their famous leader Koushid Khan they swept up the valley of the Murghab in the year 1856, driving the Sariks or previous settlers before them, and ousting them



BRIDGE OVER THE MURGHAB AT MERV.

from their city of Porsa Kala, the ruins of which still stand twenty miles to the south. Not that the Sarik city itself had any closer connection with the Merv of antiquity, the Merv or Maour [1] or Merou of which Arab scribes wrote so lovingly, and of which Moore sang: —

[1] Merv was the Persian, Maour the Tartar name.

> And fairest of all streams the Murga roves
> Among Merou's bright palaces and groves.

The real and ancient Merv or Mervs—for there were three successive cities—are situated ten miles across the plain to the east, and will be mentioned later on.

The Russian town

It was only after the youngest of these was sacked at the end of the last century, and the irrigation works, upon which its life depended, were destroyed, that the Turkomans moved westwards and made the western branch of the Murghab their headquarters. Of a people who led so unsettled a life, and whose largest centre of population was not a city but a camp, it would be useless to expect any permanent relics; and therefore it is not surprising that the present Merv consists only of the rickety town which the Russians have built, and which is inhabited mainly by Persians, Jews, and Armenians, and of the official quarter before alluded to within the mouldering walls of the never-completed Tekke fortress. The town itself, so far from increasing, is at the present moment diminishing in numbers. A visitor in 1886 describes its population as 3,000; but it cannot now be more than one-third of that total. The reason of the diminution is this. From the time of the annexation in February, 1884, and while the railway was being pushed forward to Amu Daria, Merv was the head-quarters of General Annenkoff and his staff. There was a sudden inflation of business, shops were run up, merchants came, and the brand-new Merv fancied

that it had inherited some aroma of the ancient renown. A club-house, open, as the Russian military clubs always are, to both sexes, provided a centre of social reunion, and was the scene of weekly dancing and festivity. For the less select, a music-hall reechoed on the banks of the Murghab the airs of Offenbach and the melodies of Strauss. The Turkomans, attracted by the foreign influx, flocked in large numbers from their settlements on the oasis, and drove an ephemeral but thriving trade. But with the forward movement of the railway battalion, and still more with the occupation by the line of Bokhara and Samarkand, this fictitious importance died away, most of the shops were shut, the town now contains only 285 houses, numbered from one upwards, and except on bazaar days, which are twice a week, and when a dwindling crowd of natives collects in the open air on the other or right bank of the Murghab, very little business appears to be done. Whether or not the glory of Merv may revive will depend upon the success or failure of the schemes for the regeneration of the surrounding oasis, which are now being undertaken.

History of ancient Merv

Of the ancient history of Merv, it will be sufficient here to say that it has been one of even greater and more startling vicissitudes than are common with the capitals of the East. Its glories and sieges and sacks excited the eloquence of chroniclers and the wonderment of pilgrims. Successively, a satrapy of Darius (under the name Margush, whence obviously the Greek Margus (Murghab) and Margiana); a city and

colony of Alexander;[1] a province of the Parthians, whither Orodes transported the 10,000 Roman soldiers whom he took prisoners in his famous victory over Crassus; the site of a Christian bishopric;[2] an Arabian capital (where, at the end of the eighth century, Mokannah, the veiled prophet of Khorasan, kindled the flame of schism); the seat of power of a Seljuk dynasty, and the residence and last resting-place of Alp Arslan and Sultan Sanjur; a prey to the awful scourge of the Mongol, and an altar for the human hecatombs of Jenghiz Khan; a frontier outpost of Persia; a bone of armed contention between Bokhara and Khiva; a Turkoman encampment; and a Russian town,—it has surely exhausted every revolution of fortune's wheel, and in its last state has touched the expiring chord of the diapason of romance. For English travellers and readers, its interest lies less in the faded tomes of the past than in the records of the present century, during which several visits to it, or attempts to visit it, have been made by the small but heroic band of British pioneers in Central Asia.

British travellers at Merv

Dr. Wolff, the missionary, was twice at Merv, in 1831 and again in 1844, upon his courageous errand of enquiry into the Stoddart and Conolly tragedy at Bokhara. Burnes halted on the Murghab, but did

[1] The city was known as Antiocheia Margiana, from Antiochus Soter, who rebuilt it; and it was the capital of the Græco-Syrian province of Margiana.

[2] Christianity was introduced at Merv about 200 A.D., and Jacobite and Nestorian congregations flourished there as late as under Arab rule.

not see Merv itself, on his way from Bokhara to Meshed in 1832. Abbott and Shakespear were there in 1840 on their journey to Khiva. Thomson, in 1843, was the next, and Wolff was the last English visitor for nearly forty years; MacGregor and Burnaby being both recalled in 1875, when about to start for Merv, from the West and North respectively. At length, in 1881, the curtain of mystery, torn aside by the adventurous hand of O'Donovan, revealed the Tekke Turkoman clans existing under a tribal form of government, regulated by a council and presided over by khans, and debating with feverish anxiety the impending advance of the terrible 'Ouroussi.'

Russian annexation in 1884

The circumstances of the later and pacific annexation of Merv are well known, having been debated in Parliament, discussed in Blue Books, and enshrined in substantial volumes.[1] There can be no doubt that immediately after the victory of Geok Tepe the thoughts of the Russians were turned in the direction of Merv, and Skobeleff was bitterly disappointed at not being allowed to push on so far. Prudence, however, and still more the desirability of calming the suspicions of England, suggested a temporary delay,[2] and the employment of more insidious means.

[1] Vide especially *The Russians at the Gates of Herat.* By C. Marvin. London, 1885.

[2] On March 25, 1881, in the debate on the evacuation of Kandahar in the House of Commons, Sir Charles Dilke (then Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs) gave the following enigmatic assurance: 'He was able to make this statement, that the very first act of the new Emperor, upon ascending the throne, was to recall General Skobeleff to St. Petersburg, and *to put a stop to all operations which that general had been conducting in Asia.*'

Accordingly, commercial relations were opened with the inhabitants of the Merv oasis; surveys of their country, and even of their encampment, were obtained by Alikhanoff, who under the guise of a merchant's clerk accompanied a trading caravan thither in February 1882, and conducted secret negotiations with the more propitious chieftains; the rouble was plentifully distributed;[1] and finally, in the spring of 1884—while British hands were full in Upper Egypt and no untimely interference was to be expected—the same Alikhanoff, reappearing upon the scene, enforced, by significant allusions to a Russian detachment in the immediate neighbourhood, his demand for a surrender of the tribe and their oasis to the Czar. The chiefs acquiesced and took the oath of allegiance. Komaroff's troops advanced at full speed, before the Anti-Russian party, under the lead of Kadjar Khan and one Siakh-Push, an Afghan fanatic who seems to have exercised an extraordinary influence over the Tekkes, could organise a serious resistance. A few shots were exchanged, and a certain number of Turkoman saddles emptied; the fortress of Koushid Khan Kala was occupied; the hostile leaders fled or were captured; a shower of stars and medals from St. Petersburg rewarded the services of conquest or sweetened the pains of surrender; and Merv was at last made part and parcel of the Russian Empire. The flame of diplomatic protest blazed fiercely forth in England; but, after a momentary combustion, was, as usual,

[1] Vide *Parliamentary Papers*, 'Central Asia,' No. 2, 1885, pp. 118, 129.

extinguished by a flood of excuses from the inexhaustible reservoirs of the Neva.

Fertility, resources, and population of the oasis

The oasis of Merv, which owes its existence to the bounty of the river Murghab and its subsidiary network of canals and streams, is said in most works on the subject to consist of about 1,600 square miles; though at present but a small fraction of this extent is under systematic or scientific cultivation. Its natural fertility is greater by far than that of any of the three oases hitherto encountered. As early as the tenth century the Arab traveller, Ibn Haukal, affirmed that 'the fruits of Merv are finer than those of any other place, and in no other city are to be seen such palaces and groves, and gardens and streams.' Vanished, alas! is all this ancient splendour; but still the cattle of its pastures, the fruits of its orchards—grapes, peaches, apricots, and mulberries—and the products of its fields—wheat, cotton, barley, sorghum, sesame, rice, and melons, yielding from twenty-fold to one hundred-fold—are superior to those of any other district between Khiva and Khorasan.[1] Linked to it in a chain of fertilised tracts towards the south and south-west are the minor oases of Yuletan, Sarakhs, and Penjdeh, inhabited by the Sarik and Salor Turkomans, living in scattered encampments or *aouls*, whose joint numbers are about 60,000 souls, as compared with the 110,000 Tekke Turkomans of Merv. Of the extraneous

[1] The rainfall at Merv is fifty days in the year. The mean annual temperature is 18° (Réaumur); that of the hottest month is 34°, and of the coldest month 4°.

population, 3,500 are Persians and Tartars, nearly the same number Armenians, over 2,000 Russians and Poles, 1,000 Khivans and Bokhariots, 300 Jews, and a residuum of Caucasians, Greeks, Germans, Hungarians, Afghans, and Kirghiz. These figures, derived from the latest available returns, are greatly inferior to the estimates published in all extant English works, which have ludicrously over-estimated the totals. The wealth of the oasis, other than in the products of agriculture, sericulture, and horticulture, is expressed in flocks of sheep and goats, of which there are 700,000 head, horses 20,500, asses 21,500, cattle 44,000, and camels 16,500. Its principal manufacture is that of the now renowned Turkoman carpets, of close velvety texture and uniform pattern, made by the women, and exported to Europe at the present rate of 4,000 a year, with a value of 32,000*l.* I take the following extract verbatim from one of the letters of the St. Petersburg correspondent of the 'Times,' to whom also I am indebted for the above figures :—

Administration, taxation, and irrigation

There are forty *volosts*, or sub-districts, in the Merv circuit, with four to nine *aouls* in each. Each *volost* elects an elder, and each *aoul* an *aksakal*. These all report to their khans, or *pristavs*, who, in their turn, report to the chief of the territory, Alikhanoff. The *aksakal* and three elders form a court for the trial of small offences entailing up to five roubles' fine, or three days' arrest. The khan has the right of sentencing to twenty-five roubles' fine and seven days' arrest. Delegates from each tribe, under the presidency of the *pristav*, with the assistance of a *kazi*, or religious member, may inflict a fine of fifteen roubles, and a punishment of four

months' imprisonment. Other and more important cases are decided by Colonel Alikhanoff, with representatives from all the sections. The taxes paid amount to five roubles per *kibitka*—namely, four roubles forty kopecks for the Exchequer, and half a rouble for local needs, or the *zemstvo*. In return, all caravans entering or passing through Merv pay one-fortieth of their goods. This was established in 1886, because the Bokhariots and Khivans made the Russian caravans pay. In 1886 this duty produced 30,293 roubles 69 kopecks. The crops for the same year were: Sown.—Wheat, 450,000 pouds;[1] barley, 150,000 pouds; rice, 60,000 pouds. Reaped. —Wheat, 29,700,000 pouds; barley, 4,398,000 pouds; rice, 2,400,000 pouds. The cotton grown by the Turkomans is very small, and only for their own use. About eighteen miles above Merv the Koushid Khan Bend, or dam on the Murghab, sends an equal flow of water into the two halves of the oasis by means of two principal canals, the Otamish and the Toktamish. These in their turn supply the many smaller canals of the tribes. This water arrangement is looked after by an official called the *mirab*, elected annually. Each district is subdivided into *kelemes*, and each *keleme* consists of twelve proprietors. Two *kelemes* make an *atalyk*, or *sarkar*, and enjoy water for twenty-four hours in turn. Yuletan is watered in the same way from the Murghab dam, Kasili Bend. Penjdeh is the worst irrigated district of all, as the Sariks have destroyed many of the canals.

Trade returns

The import and export trade through Merv and the overturn altogether are estimated at five millions of roubles. The figures in 1886 were:—

Import from Bokhara . . .	585,144	roubles
„ „ Khiva	62,568	„
„ „ Dereguez . . .	60,172	„
„ „ Meshed	371,690	„
„ „ Afghan Turkomania .	58,879	„
„ „ Tashkent and Askabad .	740,050	„
Total . . .	1,878,503	„

[1] The poud = 36 English lbs.

Export into Bokhara and Khiva	.	328,632 roubles
„ „ Persia		280,000 „
Total . . .		608,632 „

Russian articles sold in the shops at Merv came to about 719,765 roubles. Bokharan goods now enter free of duty by special favour, so that there is no means of judging their value. There are also no regular statistics of goods entering by railway. Altogether the overturn is reckoned at five millions, which is putting it at its very highest figure.

Future development of the oasis

In speaking, however, of the resources of the Merv oasis, I am referring to that which is still in a backward condition, and is capable of immense development. The soil is well adapted to the growth of cotton, though little is at present produced, the Turkomans apparently not having taken very kindly to the industry, though after the Russian occupation several tons of American cotton-seed were distributed gratis among the inhabitants.[1] Here, however, as well as along the equally suitable banks of the Oxus, improvement may be expected. The growth of timber, so necessary in these parched regions, has also been taken in hand. General Komaroff told me that the planting of the oasis had been commenced in real earnest, and that in time there would be growing there not less than sixty million of trees. Three million young saplings were already to be seen at the height of several feet from the ground at Bairam Ali, ten miles to the east. At the same time the work of

[1] The failure of the first attempts is attributed to the fact that the imported seed came from plantations lying near the sea coast. Since it has been brought from the interior the experiment has proved more successful.

scientific irrigation, hitherto neglected, has been begun—the repair of the great Sultan Bend Dam, fifty-three miles further up the course of the Murghab, by which alone its distribution over the lower surfaces can be properly regulated, having been committed to a young Polish engineer named Poklefski, and the entire district having been made over to the private purse of the Czar—a guarantee that its development will not be allowed to slacken, or its revenues to result in loss to the exchequer of so economical a monarch.[1] When the new system of

[1] The following interesting description of the Sultan Bend works in 1888 is translated from the Comte de Cholet's book, *Excursion en Turkestan*, pp. 202-3: 'An embankment of concrete 58 feet high, acting as a dam, will completely bar the course of the river from bank to bank. Its waters, thus driven back, will form an immense lake 375 acres in extent, out of which four sluices will be constructed, at a height exactly calculated beforehand, so as to allow of the water being distributed into big canals, carrying it into the interior of the country. Special dredging machines, invented by M. Poklefski, will be employed to stir up the waters of the lake, and to prevent the alluvium from settling; and as the velocity of the stream, the moment the sluices are opened, will be greater than that of the original current, only an insignificant portion will sink to the bottom of the canals. The latter, which are also to be intersected with sluices, and are carried forward with a regulated fall, will be subdivided into smaller canals, gradually diminishing in size, and spreading fertility and riches among the Turkomans far beyond Merv. Even in flood-time, the top of the dam being much above the normal level of the river, only an insignificant quantity of water will pass over. The lake alone will be considerably swollen, but without serious consequences, since its waters will be confined between the hills that border the Murghab both on the right and left, at a distance of several versts, and converge exactly at this spot, leaving only a narrow passage between, which will be barred by the dam. The small amount of water that may succeed in escaping over the embankment will fall into the old bed of the river, and be hemmed in between its banks; so that it will not be able to repeat the serious damage to the country that was caused by the floods of two years ago (1886), which all but swept away the new town of Merv, and destroyed at its outset the excellent handiwork of Alikhanoff. Small dams, made only

canalisation is in working order, it is anticipated that it will subdue to cultivation a territory of some 200,000 acres, upon which it is proposed to plant Russian peasants as colonists in equal number with the Turkomans. If we add to this that Merv is the very central point of the trade routes from Bokhara and the Oxus to Eastern Persia, and from Central Asia to India through Afghanistan, we can believe that there yet may rise on the banks of the Murghab a city worthy of the site and of the name.

Turkoman character

When Alikhanoff, in the disguise of a clerk, visited Merv in 1882, his report to the Russian Government contained the following not too flattering account of his future subjects: 'Besides being cruel, the Merv Tekkes never keep a promise or an oath if it suits their purpose to break it. In addition to this they are liars and gluttons. They are frightfully envious; and finally, among all the Turkomans there is not a people so unattractive in every moral respect as the Tekkes of Merv.'[1] We may conjecture that this

of fascines and sacks of earth, because they will only have to resist a slight pressure, will stop up the old canals which are no longer to be used; whilst all the other constructions, whether dams or sluices, will be made of concrete, manufactured and cemented on the spot. Two years hence (*i.e.* 1890) the whole of this work, in the competent hands of M. Poklefski, will be completed. Every *aoul*, every hamlet, every single proprietor will know exactly the period of the year at which to irrigate his fields. The surface of arable land will be multiplied almost tenfold. The whole country will be covered with marvellous crops; and the market of Merv will be able to send to Russia and the Caucasus an immense quantity of first-rate cotton, which has cost nothing to produce, and, being subject to no duty, can be sold at prices of extraordinary cheapness.' The estimated cost of the new dam was 24,000*l.*

[1] The general reputation of the Turkoman as a savage and a bandit may be illustrated by Turkoman proverbs:—

is a verdict which he would not now endorse without qualification; and though the broad features of the national character may remain stereotyped—though Turkoman morals are indubitably coarse, and their standards of honesty low, yet later travellers who have resided in their midst, or have had occasion to employ their services, have testified to the possession of good qualities on their part, such as amiability, frankness, hospitality, and a rough code of honour. M Bonvalot, the French traveller, who was at Merv in 1886, wrote a letter to the *Journal des Débats*, in which he said, 'The Russians are of opinion, and I agree with them, that the Tekkes are worthy people, very affable and mild, and with a frankness that is both astonishing and delightful after the rascality of the Persians and the platitudes of the Bokhariots.' Their behaviour is largely dependent upon the handling of the Russians, which has so far been eminently successful. As the same authority very truly remarked in his latest work,[1] 'So long as they can get

'The Turkoman neither needs the shade of a tree nor the protection of man.'

'When the sword has been drawn, who needs another excuse?'

'The Turkoman on horseback knows neither father nor mother.'

'Where there is a city there are no wolves; where there are Turkomans there is no peace.'

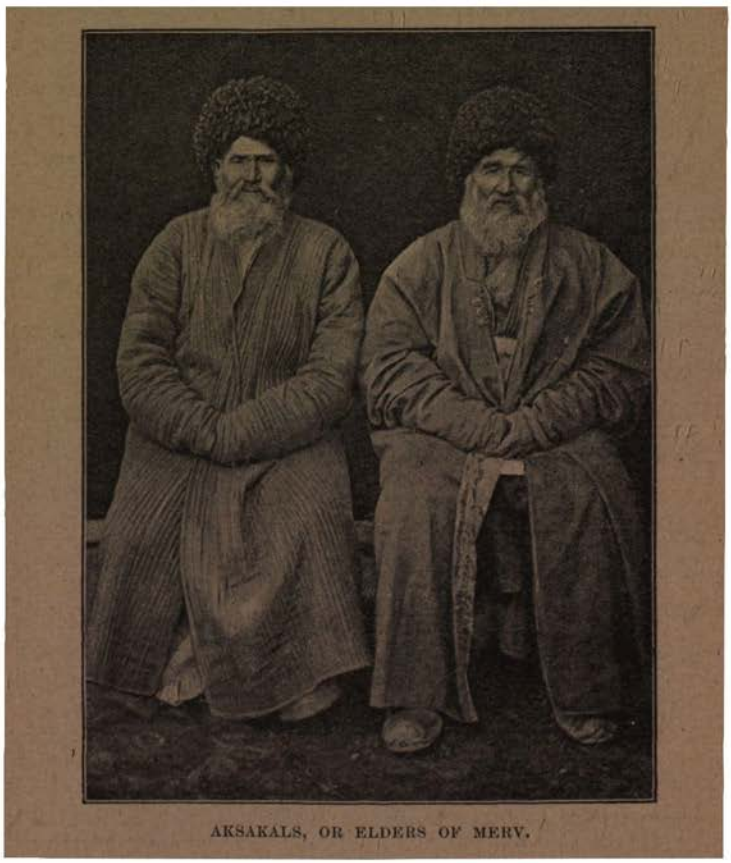
The prodigious prestige enjoyed by the Turkoman brigands is amusingly illustrated by the story told by Grodekoff (chap. i.) of a Persian who enjoyed a great reputation for bravery, and was attacked in the night by a Tekke. The Persian, being the stronger of the two, soon threw his assailant to the ground; but just as he was taking out his knife to cut the latter's throat, the Tekke called out: 'What are you doing? Do you not see that I am a Tekke?' The Persian at once lost his presence of mind and dropped the knife, which was seized by the Tekke and plunged into his opponent's heart.

[1] *Through the Heart of Asia to India.* By G. Bonvalot. 1889.

water, toleration, speedy, stern, and equitable justice, and have their taxes levied fairly, the people of Central Asia do not as a rule ask for anything more.'

Strategical importance of Merv

The overwhelming strategical importance of Merv in relation to India is a dictum which I have never



AKSAKALS, OR ELDERS OF MERV.

been able to understand. I have seen it argued with irreproachable logic, in magazine articles, that Merv is the key to Herat, Herat the key to Kandahar, and Kandahar the key to India. But the most scientific

demonstrations of *a priori* reasoning must after all yield place to experience and to fact. Russia holds Merv; and she could to-morrow, if she chose to bring about a war with England, seize Herat; not, however, because she holds Merv, but because she holds the far more advanced and important positions of Sarakhs and Penjdeh.[1] But even if she held Herat she would not therefore imperil Kandahar, while even if she held both Herat and Kandahar, she would not be much nearer the conquest of India. A great deal of nonsense has been talked in England about these so-called keys to India, and Lord Beaconsfield never said a truer thing, though at the time it was laughed at as a sounding platitude, than when he declared that the keys of India are to be found in London, and consist in the spirit and determination of the British people. The political benefits to Russia resulting from the annexation of Merv were very considerable, and ought not to be underrated. They were threefold, having an easterly, a westerly, and a local application. It set the seal upon the absorption of the Khanates, by establishing Russia upon the left

[1] Vide the prophetic opinion of Sir C. MacGregor on the strategical importance of Sarakhs expressed in 1875 (*Life and Opinions*, vol. ii. p. 15).: 'Placed at the junction of roads of Herat and Meshed by the Heri-Rud and Ab-i-Meshed valleys respectively, and at the best entrance to the province of Khorasan from the north, it cannot fail to exercise a very serious influence on the momentous issue of the Russo-Indian Question. This must happen, whether it falls into the hands of the friends of England or into those of her foes. Whether Russia uses Sarakhs as a base for offensive measures against Herat, or England as a defensive outpost to defeat any such operations, that position will be heard of again. And if my feeble voice can effect a warning ere it is too late, let it be here raised in these words: "If England does not use Sarakhs for defence, Russia will use it for offence!"'

as well as upon the right of Bokhara, and leaving that country very much in the position of metal between the hammer and the anvil, to be moulded or flattened at will. It completed the flank circumvention of Khorasan, by the erection of a powerful military post on its eastern or Afghan quarter. And finally it rounded off the conquest, and centralised the administration of the Turkoman oases and deserts, the bulk of which passed straightway, and the residue of which will ultimately pass, beneath Russian rule. Nor is the immediate value of Merv to Russia by any means to be despised, both because of its trading position, and because, being the centre of a large oasis, it could sustain a numerous army at a distance from its base through one or more winters. These are advantages on her side which it would be foolish to ignore, but which it is still more foolish to magnify into a real peril to our Indian possessions.

Ferment on the Afghan frontier arising out of the revolt of Is-hak Khan

When we reached Merv I had hoped to find Colonel Alikhanoff, the celebrated governor of the district, to whom I had a letter of introduction. But he was absent, and the most mysterious and conflicting rumours prevailed as to his whereabouts. I ascertained afterwards, however, that he had left suddenly for the frontier with a Russian battalion and a squadron of the Turkoman cavalry; and the fact that a Cossack officer, travelling in our company to rejoin his regiment at Merv, was abruptly ordered to follow in the same direction showed that something was on the *tapis* in that quarter. I mentioned in my first chapter that the revolt of Is-hak Khan in

Afghanistan had been alleged in St. Petersburg as a reasonable excuse for the prohibition of our journey to Transcaspia; and I had been much interested at reading in the Russian journals, which are, as is well known, subject to official supervision, the most exaggerated and fantastic estimates of the Afghan Pretender's chances of success. These reports were so absurdly biassed as to leave no doubt, not merely that Is-hak Khan had the clandestine sympathy of the Russian Government, but that he was publicly regarded as the Russian candidate to the Afghan throne. Upon arriving at Merv we heard a rumour that Abdurrahman was dead, and that Is-hak, who had been uniformly successful, was marching upon Kabul. This single item of false information will give some idea of the inferiority under which Russia seems to labour as compared with ourselves in point of news from Afghanistan. Her intelligence comes in the main viâ Balkh and the Oxus to Bokhara, and appears to be as unreliable as is the news from Bokhara commonly transmitted to the British Government through Stamboul. However, this news, false though it was, had been enough to throw the Russian military authorities into a ferment; and what I afterwards heard at Tashkent made it clear that there was a considerable massing of Russian troops upon the Afghan frontier, and that a forward movement must even have been contemplated. I asked a Russian diplomatist what excuse his country could possibly have for interfering in Afghanistan at this juncture, even if Is-hak Khan were successful; and he wisely

professed an ignorance on the subject equal to my own. But the fact remains that the troops were so moved, and that at Kerki, the Russian frontier station on the Amú Daria, there was collected at this time a body of men, enormously in excess of garrison requirements, and therefore of threatening dimensions. In Tashkent I was informed by an officer that the talk was all of an invasion of Afghanistan and of war; and though I do not desire to attach any importance to the military gossip of a place where bellicose ideas have always prevailed, and where there is no lack of spirits who care little about morality, but a great deal about medals,—still I must place on record the fact that, in a time of absolute peace and with no possible provocation, the Russians considered themselves sufficiently interested in the internal status of Afghanistan, a country which they have a score of times declared to be outside the sphere of their legitimate political interference, to make a menacing display of military force upon her frontier.

Movements of Is-hak and Abdurrahman

There was not at that time the provocation which the Amir Abdurrahman is since alleged to have given by the ferment arising out of his vindictive punishment of the rebels and suspects in Afghan Turkestan, and which was followed in February of this year by much larger Russian concentration on the boundary. In neither case was any legitimate excuse likely to be forthcoming for advance. For in the former instance the success of Is-hak Khan would not have justified a violation of the frontier by Russia, any more than his defeat was likely to lead to its violation

by Afghanistan; whilst in the latter, the proceedings of Abdurrahman, though perhaps well calculated to cause a great local stir, admitted of no aggressive interpretation as regards either Russia or Bokhara, into whose territories so calculating a ruler was not in the least likely to rush to his own perdition. The Russian movements on both occasions, if they illustrate nothing more, are at least noteworthy as testifying to the anxiety with which they regard the Oxus frontier, and to the watchful, if not covetous, eye which they direct upon Afghan Turkestan. Though the war-cloud has for the present happily rolled by in that quarter, we must not be surprised if before long its horrid shadow reappears. When I afterwards heard at Tashkent of the collapse of Is-hak, the rumour prevailed that he had fled to Bokhara, and from there had been removed to his old quarters at Samarkand. This last report was denied by the Russian officials, who repudiated any desire to countenance the pretender by allowing him an asylum on Russian soil. A significant commentary on their denial was afforded by his subsequent retreat at their invitation to that very spot, where he now resides surrounded by a considerable retinue, a tool in the hands of his hosts, and whom we may expect at any moment to see re-emerge as a thorn in our side, in the event either of disaster or of death to Abdurrahman Khan.

Colonel Alikhanoff Governor of Merv

I subsequently met Colonel Alikhanoff and was introduced to him by General Komaroff. Speaking of the aptitude which Russia has so often displayed for

employing in her own armies those whom she has already vanquished as opponents, the general told me that Alikhanoff's father, who was now a general, had himself fought against Russia in the Caucasian wars. This provoked the obvious rejoinder, that the way to become a Russian general was clearly to begin by having been a Russian foe. Of the personality of Alikhanoff himself I believe that a somewhat mistaken impression exists in England. Those who are acquainted with the part that he played in the diplomatic subjugation of Merv between the years 1882 and 1884, to which I have already alluded, or who have read of his great influence in the Turkoman oasis, and of his Mussulman religion, are apt to picture to themselves a man of Oriental habits and appearance. A greater mistake could not be made. Alikhanoff is a tall man, with ruddy complexion, light hair, and a prodigious auburn, almost reddish, beard. A Lesghian of Daghestan by birth, whose real name is Ali Khan Avarski, he has all the appearance of having hailed from the banks of the Tay or the Clyde. He has been in the Russian army from early years, and served under Skobeleff in the Khivan campaign. Already a major, he was degraded to the ranks in 1875 because of a duel with a brother officer, and served as a private in the Russo-Turkish war. When the Turkoman expeditions began in 1879, he went to Asia, reached the highest non-commissioned officer's rank in the same year, and returned at the close of Skobeleff's campaign in 1881. Promoted a captain after his reconnaissance of the Merv oasis in 1882, and a major after the annexa-

tion of Merv in 1884, he is now a full colonel in the Russian army, Nachalnik or Governor of the Merv oasis, Warden of the Marches along the Afghan border, and judge of appeal among the Turkoman tribes, and at the early age of forty, though reported to be a dissatisfied man, finds himself the most talked-of personage in Central Asia. His religion, no doubt, stands him in great stead. But I do not know what other special advantages he possesses beyond his own ability and courage.

The Turkoman militia

As the central point between Turkestan and Transcaspia and as commanding the Russo-Afghan frontier, Merv is an important garrison town. According to the latest information, there are stationed here two battalions of the line, a regiment of Cossacks, a battery of artillery, and a company of sappers. Here too are always to be found some of the Turkoman militia, whom Russia, abandoning her old policy of non-employment of Asiatic troops, has latterly begun to enlist. There are at the present moment three *sotnias*, or companies, of Turkoman horse, with 100 men in each, which were constituted by a formal authorisation from the Minister of War in February 1885. To this number were added a few Caucasians who had already served in the Russian militia on the other side of the Caspian, and several Russian officers. The Turkomans already enrolled are picked men, there being great competition to join the force, and the list of candidates is overstocked with names. The more dangerous and turbulent characters were at first selected, in order to provide them with a legitimate

outlet for spirits trained in the love of horseflesh and adventure, but condemned to distasteful idleness since the abolition of the *alaman* or border-raid. In the ranks and among the officers are several men who fought against Skobeleff at Geok Tepe. They learned European drill and discipline very quickly, the movements being first explained to them in Turki, while the commands were subsequently, and are still, given in Russian. Their uniform is the national *khalat*, or striped pink and black dressing-gown, with sheepskin bonnet, a broad sash round the waist, and big Russian top-boots. They are armed with the Berdan rifle and a cavalry sabre. The pay of the men is 25 roubles (2*l.* 10*s.*) a month, and of the officers from 50 to 100 roubles (5*l.* to 10*l.*); but out of this sum they are required to provide their own horse, kit, and keep, the Government supplying them only with rifle and ammunition. Already they have shown of what stuff they are made in the affray upon the Kushk in 1885, when they charged down with extreme delight upon their hereditary foes, the Afghans, and did creditable execution. I subsequently saw a small detachment of these troops, who had been brought over by Alikhanoff to Baku, to greet the Emperor, and was struck with their workmanlike appearance.

Possible increase of the force

Although the force is at present limited to 300 men, it may be regarded as being reinforced by a powerful unmobilised reserve. Nearly every Turkoman who can afford it keeps a horse, and, unable to play the freebooter, is quite ready to turn free lance

THE TURKOMAN MILITIA

KHARAGPUR

at a moment's notice. General Komaroff assured me that the total under arms could without difficulty be increased to 8,000, and I afterwards read in the 'Times' that Colonel Alikhanoff told the correspondent of that paper that in twenty-four hours he could raise 6,000 mounted men—a statement which tallies with that of the general. If there is some exaggeration in these estimates, at least there was no want of explicitness in the famous threat of Skobeleff, who in his memorandum on the invasion of India, drawn up in 1877, wrote: 'It will be in the end our duty to organise masses of Asiatic cavalry and to hurl them into India as a vanguard, under the banner of blood and rapine, thereby reviving the times of Tamerlane.' Even if this sanguinary forecast be forgotten, or if it remain unrealised, there is yet sound policy in this utilisation of the Turkoman manhood, inasmuch as it may operate as an antidote to the deteriorating influence of European civilisation, which, entering this unsophisticated region in its own peculiar guise, and bringing brandy and *vodka* in its train, is already beginning to enfeeble the virile type of these former slave-hunters of the desert.

The Turkoman horses

When General Grodekoff rode from Samarkand to Herat in 1878, he recorded his judgment of the value of the Turkoman horses in these words: 'If ever we conquer Merv, besides imposing a money contribution, we ought to take from the Tekkes all their best stallions and mares. They would then at once cease to be formidable.' For the policy of confiscation has wisely been substituted that of utilising

the equine resources of the oasis. None the less it is open to question whether the power and endurance of the Turkoman horses, reputed though they are to be able to accomplish from 70 to 100 miles a day for a week at a time, have not been greatly exaggerated. Travellers have related astonishing stories second-hand of their achievements; but those who have had actual experience are content with a more modest

TURKOMAN HORSEMEN.

tale. Certainly the long neck, large head, narrow chest, and weedy legs of the Turkoman horse do not correspond with European taste in horseflesh. But the English members of the Afghan Boundary Commission thought still less of them in use. A few only were bought at prices of from 20*l.* to 25*l.* And Colonel Ridgeway, who was authorised by the Indian Government to expend 300*l.* upon first-class Turkoman

stallions for breeding purposes, did not draw one penny upon his credit.[1]

The Khans of Merv at Baku

It was with perfect justice that General Komaroff boasted of the facility with which Russia succeeds in enlisting, not only the services, but the loyalty of her former opponents. The volunteer enrolment of the Turkoman horse would be a sufficient proof of this, had it not already been paralleled in India and elsewhere. But I can give a more striking illustration still. On my return to Baku, I saw drawn up on the landing-stage to greet the Governor-General a number of gorgeously-clad Turkomans, robed in magnificent velvet or embroidered *khalats*, and their breasts ablaze with decorations. They, too, had come over to be presented to the Czar. At the head of the line stood a dignified-looking Turkoman, with an immense pair of silver epaulettes on his shoulders. This, the general told me, was Makdum Kuli Khan, son of the famous Tekke chieftain Nur Verdi Khan by an Akhal wife, the hereditary leader of the Vekhil or Eastern division of the Merv Tekkes, and the chief of the Akhal Tekkes in Geok Tepe at the time of the siege. Reconciled to Russia at an early date, he was taken to Moscow to attend the coronation of the Czar in 1883, and is now a full colonel and Governor of the Tejend oasis—where but lately, in the exercise of his

[1] Vide *Travels with the Afghan Boundary Commission.* By Lieut. A. C. Yate. P. 457. 1887. Cf. also the remarks of Sir Peter Lumsden. *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society.* September 1885. It is only fair to state that Sir C. MacGregor formed an opposite opinion when in Khorasan in 1875. *Life and Opinions*, vol. ii. p. 10.

administrative powers, he, a Turkoman and an old Russian enemy, arrested a Russian captain serving under his command. And yet this was the man who, in 1881, told Edmund O'Donovan that 'it was the intention of himself and his staunch followers to fight to the last should Merv be invaded by the Russians, and if beaten to retire into Afghanistan. If not well received there, they purposed asking an asylum within the frontiers of British India.' Adjoining him stood his younger brother, Yussuf Khan, son of Nur Verdi by his famous Merv wife, Gur Jemal, a boy of fifteen or sixteen at the time of O'Donovan's visit, but now a Russian captain; Maili Khan and Sari Batir Khan, chiefs of the Sichmaz and Bakshi, two others of the four tribes of Merv; old Murad Bey, leader of the Beg subdivision of the Toktamish clan, who conducted O'Donovan to the final meeting of the Great Council; and, *mirabile dictu*, Baba Khan himself, son of the old conqueror Koushid Khan, and hereditary leader of the Toktamish, the one-eyed Baba, who led the English party at Merv in 1881, and, in order to demonstrate his allegiance to the Queen, branded his horses with V.R. reversed and imprinted upside down. The three last-named are now majors in the Russian service. Baba's colleague of the Triumvirate of 1881, Niaz Khan, is also a Russian officer, but did not appear to be present. The old Ikhtyar at the date of O'Donovan's arrival, Kadjar Khan, who led the forlorn anti-Russian movement in 1884, is detained in St. Petersburg. Gur Jemal, the elderly matron and former chieftainess, of

THE FOUR KHANS OF MERV

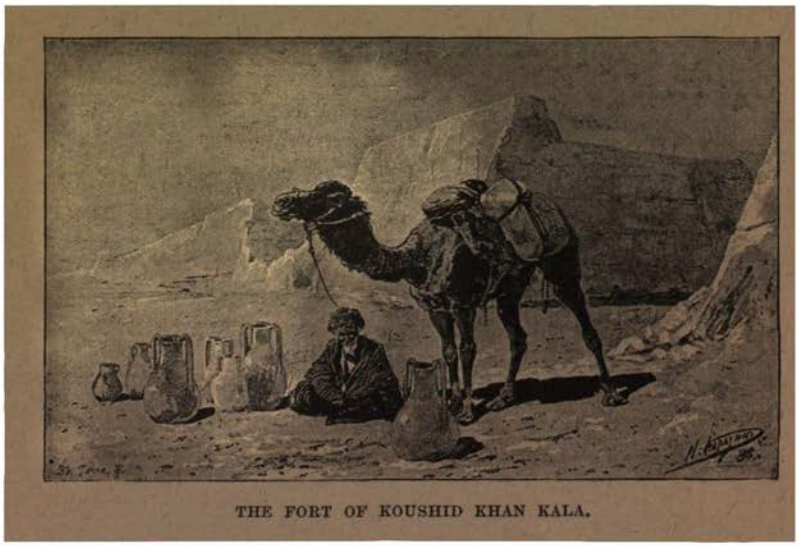
whom I have spoken, and whose potent influence was so diplomatically enlisted by Russia prior to the annexation of Merv, was also in Baku, waiting to receive the compliments, to which she was unquestionably entitled, from the lips of the Emperor. There were also present the Khans of the Sarik and Salor Turkomans of Yuletan, Sarakhs, and Penjdeh, and some imposing Kirghiz notabilities with gorgeous accoutrements and prodigiously high steeple-crowned hats. The delegation brought with them rich carpets and a collection of wild animals as presents to the Emperor, who in return loaded them with European gifts and arms, and said in the course of his speech that he hoped to repay their visit at Merv in 1889 or 1890.

I do not think that any sight could have impressed me more profoundly with the completeness of Russia's conquest, or with her remarkable talents of fraternisation with the conquered, than the spectacle of these men (and among their thirty odd companions who were assembled with them, there were doubtless other cases as remarkable), only eight years ago the bitter and determined enemies of Russia on the battlefield, but now wearing her uniform, standing high in her service, and crossing to Europe in order to salute as their sovereign the Great White Czar. Skobeleff's policy of 'Hands all round,' when the fight is over, seems to have been not one whit less successful than was the ferocious severity of the preliminary blow.

If other evidence were needed of Russia's triumph, it might be found in the walls of the great earthen

The ruined fortress of Koushid Khan Kala

fortress of Koushid Khan Kala, through which the locomotive steams immediately after leaving the station at Merv. Erected in 1881 by forced labour, 8,000 Tekkes being daily engaged upon the enterprise, its unfinished and dismantled ramparts are not less eloquent in their testimony than was the shattered embankment of Geok Tepe. Sixty feet at their base, and twenty feet at the summit, and from thirty to



THE FORT OF KOUSHID KHAN KALA.

forty feet high, and originally enclosing a space one and three-quarters of a mile long by three-quarters of a mile broad, these huge clay structures, which were intended finally and utterly to repel the Muscovite advance, have never either sheltered besieged or withstood besiegers. Like a great railway embankment they overtop the plain, and in their premature decay are imposing monuments of a bloodless victory.

The military and political questions arising out of

the mention of Merv have almost tempted me to forget my undertaking to make some allusion to the old cities that at different times have borne the name. When the train, however, after traversing the oasis for ten miles from the modern town, pulls up at the station of Bairam Ali, in the midst of an absolute wilderness of crumbling brick and clay, the spectacle of walls, towers, ramparts, and domes, stretching in

Old cities of Merv

RUINS OF BAIRAM ALI.

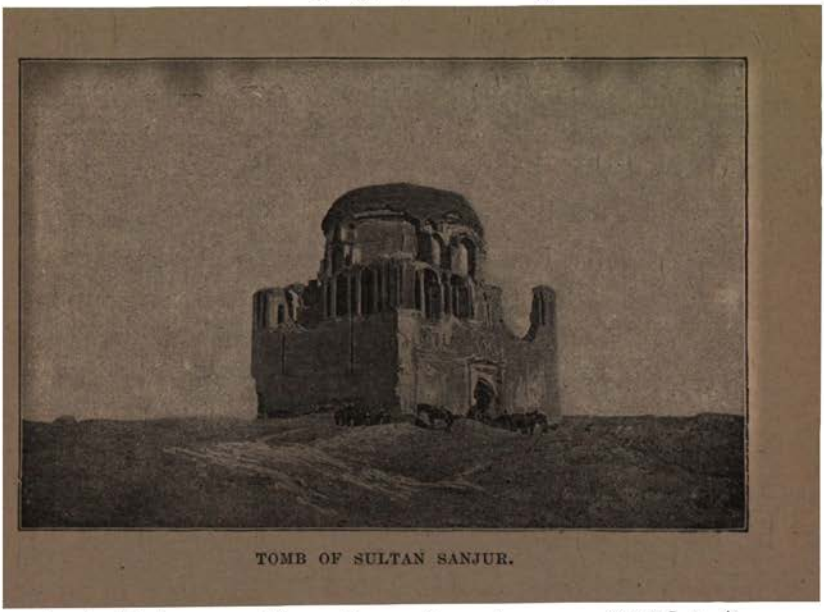
bewildering confusion to the horizon, reminds us that we are in the centre of bygone greatness. Here, within a short distance of each other, and covering an area of several square miles, in which there is scarcely a yard without some remains of the past, or with a single perfect relic, are to be seen the ruins of at least three cities that have been born, and flourished, and have died. The eldest and easternmost of these is the city now called Giaour Kala, and variously

attributed by the natives, according to the quality of their erudition, to Zoroaster, or to Iskander, the local name for Alexander the Great. In these parts anything old, and misty, and uncertain is set down with unfaltering confidence to the Macedonian conqueror.[1] I was told by a long resident in the country that the general knowledge of past history is limited to three names—Alexander, Tamerlane, and Kaufmann; the Russian Governor-General, as the most recent, being popularly regarded as the biggest personage of the three. Giaour Kala, if it be the city of Alexander, is the fort said to have been built by him in B.C. 328, on his return from the campaign in Sogdiana.[2] It was destroyed by the Arabs 1,200 years ago. In its present state it consists of a great rectangular walled enclosure with the ruins of a citadel in its north-east corner. Next in age and size comes the city of the Seljuks, of Alp Arslan, the Great Lion, and of Sultan Sanjur, so celebrated in chronicles and legends, who in the twelfth century ruled as lieutenant of the Khalif in the almost independent kingdom of Khorasan. Pillaged and destroyed with true Mongol ferocity by the son of Jenghiz Khan about 1220, it now consists of a heap of shapeless ruins, above which loom the still intact dome and crumbling walls of the

[1] The ubiquity and vitality of the Alexandrine legend is well illustrated by the story, told by the Russian traveller Pashino, of an Afghan whom he met in a train in India in 1875, and who, in reply to the information that the reigning emperor of Russia was Alexander, or Iskander, by name, exclaimed: 'Dear me! was it not he who conquered India, and of whom a great deal is said in the Scriptures?'

[2] This visit of Alexander rests, however, on insufficient authority, and cannot be accepted as historical.

tomb of the great Sultan himself. The sepulchre of Alp Arslan with its famous inscription—'All ye who have seen the glory of Alp Arslan exalted to the heavens, come hither to Merv, and behold it buried in the dust'—has long disappeared, gravestone as well as glory having perished in the same ruin. Thirdly comes the Persian city of Bairam Ali, from which the station on the new railway is named, and which took its own name from its last defender and Khan, who perished 100 years ago while resisting the successful assault of Amir Maasum, otherwise known as Begi Jan or Shah Murad, of Bokhara. This was the final and last end of a real and visible Merv, which has since that date been a geographical designation instead



TOMB OF SULTAN SANJUR.

of a built town. Very decrepit and sorrowful looked these wasting walls of sun-dried clay, these broken

arches and tottering towers; but there is magnificence in their very extent, and a voice in the sorrowful

RUINED CARAVANSERAI AT BAIRAM ALI.

squalor of their ruin. Prior to O'Donovan, Abbott was the only visitor who appears to have bestowed upon them the slightest attention. Excavations have never yet been properly undertaken on this interesting site, the Russians appearing to be too much occupied with the political settlement of the country (to be able to turn a thought to archæology or to research.) But if history is of any account, a lucrative harvest ought here to await the excavator's spade.

Emotions of the traveller

Travelling thus Eastward, and arrested at each forward step by some relic of a dead civilisation, or of a glorious but forgotten past, the imagination of the European cannot but be impressed with the thought that he is mounting the stream of the ages, and tracing towards its remote source the ancestry from which

his own race has sprung. His feet are treading in an inverse direction the long route of humanity. The train that hurries him onward into new scenes seems at the same time to carry him backward into antiquity, and with every league that he advances the *mise en scène* recedes into a dimmer distance. History lies outspread before him like the page of a Chinese manuscript, to decipher which he must begin at the bottom and work his way upwards to the top. Wherever he halts, there in a waste of ruin he discovers the flotsam and jetsam of the mighty human current that rolled down from the Central Asian plateau on to the plains of Europe and the shores of the Mediterranean. How eloquent is this dried-up river-bed, with its huge water-worn boulders lying as they were thrown up by the eddies of the vanished swirl! At last in our time the current would seem to have turned back upon itself, and man, like water, is following a law of nature in rising to his original level. His face is turned Eastward and he seeks his primæval home.

Central Asian scenery

In these solitudes, moreover, the traveller may realise in all its sweep the mingled gloom and grandeur of Central Asian scenery. Throughout the still night the fire-horse, as the natives have sometimes christened it, races onward, panting audibly, gutturally, and shaking a mane of sparks and smoke. Itself and its riders are all alone. No token or sound of life greets eye or ear; no outline redeems the level sameness of the dim horizon; no shadows fall upon the staring plain. The moon shines with dreary

coldness from the hollow dome, and a profound and tearful solitude seems to brood over the desert. The returning sunlight scarcely dissipates the impression of sadness, of desolate and hopeless decay, of a continent and life sunk in a mortal swoon. The traveller feels like a wanderer at night in some desecrated graveyard, amid crumbling tombstones and half-obliterated mounds. A cemetery, not of hundreds of years but of thousands, not of families or tribes but of nations and empires, lies outspread around him; and ever and anon, in falling tower or shattered arch, he stumbles upon some poor unearthed skeleton of the past.

The sand-dunes again

The Merv oasis is considered to extend for forty-five miles east from the bank of the Murghab, and for the greater part of this distance is well worthy of the name. Here I saw greater cultivation, a richer growth, and a more numerous native population than at any previous stage of the journey. The *ariks* or irrigation-channels still contained water, the infiltration of which accounted for the rich *parterres* of green. In and near the ditches grew tall plumed grasses five feet or six feet high. The native huts, clustered together like black beehives, showed that the Mervi had not under their new masters deserted their old habitations. The men were to be seen everywhere in the fields, lazily mounted on horses or on asses. When the desert reappears, it comes in the literal sense of the word with a vengeance. Between the oasis and the Amu Daria intervene a hundred miles of the sorriest waste that ever met the human eye. East and west, and north and south, stretches a

troubled sea of sand, each billow clearly defined and arrested as it were in mid career, like an ocean wave curving to fall. I never saw anything more melancholy than the appearance of this wilderness, and its sickle-shaped dome-like ridges of driven sand with smoky summits, succeeding each other with the regularity of infantry files. Each has the appearance of being cloven through the crown, the side facing towards the north-east, whence the prevailing winds blow, being uniformly convex and smooth, while the southern face is vertical and abrupt. From time immemorial nature's curse has been upon this spot; and successive travellers and historians have testified to the dismal continuity of its reputation.

Description by the ancients

From the quaint Elizabethan translation of Quintus Curtius, by one J. Brende (1553), I take the following passage, descriptive of this very region between the Murghab and the Oxus:—

> The nature of the soyle of whiche countrey is divers and of sundrye kindes. Some place is plentifull of woode and vines, and aboundaunte of pleasaunte fruite, the grounde fatte, well watered, and full of springes. Those partes which be most temperate are sowed with corne, and the rest be reserved for fedying of beastes. But the greater part of the countrey is covered over with baraine sandes, and withered up for want of moisture, nourishing neither man, nor bringinge forth fruite. But with certaine windes that come from the Sea of Ponte (*i.e.* the Caspian) the sand in the plaines is blowen together in heapes, which seme a farre of like great hilles, wherby the accustomed wayes be damned, so that no signe of them can appere. Therfore such as do passe those plaines use to observe the starres in the night as thei do that sayle the seas, and by the course of them

direct their journey. The nightes for the more parte be brighter than the dayes, wherfore in the daye time the countrey is wild and unpassible, when they can neither finde any tracte nor waye to go in, nor marke or signe wherby to passe, the starres beying hidden by the miste. If the same winde chaunce to come durying the time that men be passying, it overwhelmeth them with sande.

Not less accurate, and perhaps even more realistic, is the narrative of the illustrious Spanish Hidalgo Don Ruy de Clavijo, who, crossing the Oxus sands on December 10, 1404, on his homeward journey from a mission to the Court of Timur at Samarkand, wrote as follows:—

> On the banks there were great plains of sand, and the sand was moved from one part to another by the wind, and was thrown up in mounds. In this sandy waste there are great valleys and hills, and the wind blew the sand away from one hill to another, for it was very light; and on the ground, where the wind had blown away the sand, the marks of waves were left; and men could not keep their eyes on this sand when the sun was shining.[1]

Difficulties of the railway

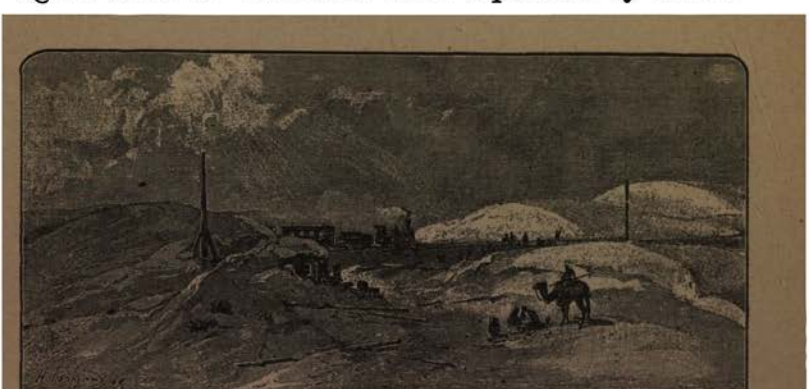
This was the most difficult section of the line to build, there being next to no natural vegetation to aid in fixing the sands, and the displacement when gales blew being tremendous. I have mentioned that the Russians are now in some places beginning to plant the *saxaoul*. This is a slight atonement for the foolish economy which led them, on their first arrival, almost to exterminate it in several districts for the sake of fuel.

[1] *Narrative of the Embassy of Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo to the Court of Timour at Samarkand*, A.D. 1403. Translated by Clements R. Markham for the Hakluyt Society, 1859.

A relic of this mistaken policy in the shape of big stacks of gnarled roots and boughs may still be seen at several of the stations, which in this region are little more than rude shanties built of a few planks and half-buried in the sand. I expect that if General Annenkoff begins to expend his credit in this horrible waste, the major part will be swallowed up before he emerges on the other side.

At last, after a whole day of this desolation, we again come to cultivated land separated by a line

The Oxus



THE RAILWAY AND THE SANDS.

that might have been drawn by a rule from the Kara Kum. Passing at a slight distance the town and fort of Tcharjui, where Bokharan territory begins, and which is commanded by a Beg or native Governor, the railway traverses six miles of orchard and garden and brings us at length to the source and giver of this great bounty, the Amu Daria or Oxus itself. There in the moonlight gleamed before us the broad bosom of the mighty river that from the glaciers of the Pamir rolls its 1,500 miles of current down to

the Aral Sea. In my ears were continually ringing the beautiful words of Matthew Arnold, who alone of English poets has made the great Central Asian river the theme of his muse, and has realised its extraordinary and mysterious personality. Just as when upon its sandy marge the hero Rustum bewailed his dead son, so now before our eyes

> the majestic river floated on
> Out of the mist and hum of that low land
> Into the frosty twilight, and there moved
> Rejoicing through the hushed Chorasmian waste
> Under the solitary moon.

The Gihon of Eden, 'that encompasseth the whole land of Ethiopia,'[1] the Vak-shu of Sanskrit literature, the Oxus of the Greeks, the Amu Daria, or River-Sea, of the Tartars—no river, not even the Nile, can claim a nobler tradition, or a more illustrious history. Descending from the hidden 'Roof of the world,' its waters tell of forgotten peoples and whisper secrets of unknown lands. They are believed to have rocked the cradle of our race. Long the legendary watermark between Iran and Turan, they have worn a channel deep into the fate of humanity. World-wide conquerors, an Alexander and a Tamerlane, slaked their horses' thirst in the Oxus stream; Eastern poets drank inspiration from its fountains; Arab geographers boasted of it as 'superior in volume, in depth, and in breadth to all the rivers of the earth.'

Width and appearance of channel

The bed of the Amu Daria—*i.e.* the depression which is covered in time of high water—is here between

[1] Genesis ii. 13.

THE BEG OF TCHARJUI AND HIS COURT

two and three miles wide; though in summer, when swollen by the melted snows of the Hindu Kush and the Pamir, the inundated surface sometimes extends to five miles. In the autumn and winter, when the waters have shrunk, the channel is confined within its true banks, and is then from half a mile to a mile in width, flowing with a rapid current of most irregular depth over a shifting and sandy bottom. When Burnes crossed it at Tcharjui in August 1832, he found the channel about 650 yards across. At the time of our visit, in October 1888, the stream was unusually low, and the main channel was of no greater dimensions. Mud-banks, covered with ooze or sand, showed where the current had only recently subsided. Still, however, did it merit the title, 'The great Oxus stream, the yellow Oxus.' The colour of the water is a very dirty coffee-hued brown, the facsimile of that of the Nile; but it is extremely healthy and can be drunk with impunity. I was strangely reminded by the appearance of this great river, by the formation of its bed, by the structure of its banks, and by the scenery and life which they displayed, of many a landscape on the Nile in Upper Egypt. There is the same fringe of intensely fertile soil along its shores, with the same crouching clay-built villages, and even a Bokharan counterpart to the *sakkiyeh* and *shadoof*, for raising and distributing the life-giving waters of the stream. Only on the Oxus there is no cliff like the eastern wall of the Nile at Gebel-et-Tayr, and, alas! in this northern latitude there is no belt of coroneted palms.

General Annenkoff's wooden railway bridge

The problem of crossing the Amu Daria at this place was regarded as the most serious difficulty by which General Annenkoff was confronted, and the bridge by which he solved it, though confessedly only a temporary structure, is looked upon by his followers with parental pride. It is an inelegant structure, built entirely of wood, which was brought all the way from Russia, and rests on more than 3,000 piles, which are driven very close together into the bed of the stream. At first the plan was contemplated of conveying the railway across upon a kind of steam ferry worked by a cable which was to be fixed upon a largish island in mid-stream. But this idea was presently surrendered in favour of the existing structure, which was designed by M. Daragan and built by a Polish engineer, named Bielinski, for the very moderate sum of 30,000*l.*, the economy of the undertaking being its chief recommendation to the authorities. It is constructed in four sections, there being four branches of the river at this spot, separated by islands. The united length of the four bridges is over 2,000 yards. M. Mestcherin told me with pride that the main part had been put up in the extraordinarily brief period of 103 days. The top of the bridge is inconsiderably elevated above the river, and the rails, though thirty feet above the lowest water, are only five feet above the level of the highest flood. A small plank platform and handrail runs alongside of the single line of rails. Our train crawled very slowly across, and occupied fifteen minutes in the transit.

As soon as the bridge was finished, the Russians

with amazing stupidity did their best to ruin it altogether by cutting it in two. A section in the centre had been so constructed as to swing open and to admit of a steamboat, which had been built in St. Petersburg and put together just below, and in which it was expected that General Rosenbach, who came down to attend the inaugural function, would make a journey up-stream to Kerki. It did not seem to have occurred to anybody that if the steamer was only intended for up-stream traffic, it might as well have been pieced together above the bridge as below. However, when it approached the gap, this was discovered to have been made just too small. Sooner than disappoint the general, who was kept in ignorance of what was passing, or confess their blunder, the Russian engineers sliced another section of the bridge in two, pulling up two of the main clusters of piles. The result was that the bridge, frail enough to start with, and with its continuity thus cruelly shattered, nearly collapsed altogether; and some months were spent in getting it into working order again. It was quite anticipated that it would not survive the unusually high floods of 1888; and no one believes it can last more than a very few years. An even greater risk, to which so prodigious a structure built entirely of wood is by its nature exposed, is that of fire, ignited by a falling spark. To meet this danger, six fire stations with pumps and hose have been established on the top. However, the bridge will already have served its purpose, if only in conveying across the material for the continuation of the railway to

Its temporary character

Samarkand, and must ultimately be replaced by a more solid iron fabric, the cost of which, according to the plan of construction, is variously estimated at from 250,000*l.* to 2,000,000*l.* sterling. There is only one argument, apart from the cost, against an iron bridge, which may retard the execution. The Oxus is inclined to shift, not only its bed, but its entire channel. Tcharjui, now six miles inland, was originally upon the western bank of the river, and there cannot be a doubt that, whether it be due, as is said, to a centrifugal force arising from the rotation of the earth and compelling rivers to impinge upon their eastern banks, or to other causes, the eastward movement of the river still continues. It would be, to say the least, exasperating to build a big iron bridge to cross a river, and to find it eventually straddling over dry land. Training-walls and a great expense would be required to counteract this danger.

The Oxus flotilla

Below the present bridge were to be seen some of the boats belonging to the much-vaunted Oxus flotilla, so dear to the imagination of Russian Jingoes, as providing a parallel line of advance upon Afghanistan. As yet its resources cannot be described as in a very forward condition. They consist of five vessels, the largest of which are two paddle-steamers of very light draught ($2\frac{1}{2}$ feet when laden), called respectively the *Czar* and *Czaritsa*, of 165 tons each, 150 ft. long and 23 ft. broad, and with engines of 500 horse-power. The first of these was launched in September 1887. The cost was 14,000*l.* Each of them can carry 300 men and 20 officers, and is navigated by 30 men.

OPENING OF THE OXUS BRIDGE

They are reputed to be able to do 16 miles an hour in smooth water. For the present one is to ply between Amu Daria and Petro Alexandrovsk, just above Khiva; the other up-stream to Kerki, the most advanced military position of Russia on the river, 140 miles from Tcharjui, occupied by agreement with Bokhara, to whom strictly it belongs, in May 1887, and garrisoned by Russian troops since. Kerki is an important place, both commercially, as the market for the Afghan towns of Andkui and

THE OXUS FLOTILLA.

Maimena, and the trading point of transfer between Turkomania and Afghan Turkestan; and strategically, as the point from which, either by river or, as is more probable, by rail (extended hither along the bank of the Amu Daria from Tcharjui), a Russian advance may ultimately be expected upon Northern Afghanistan. Hitherto the difficulties of navigation, arising partly from the swiftness of current, which impedes any but powerful steamers, partly from the shallow and shifting channel which renders the

employment of such almost impossible, have had a disheartening effect; and it was only after many vicissitudes that the first effort to reach Kerki was accomplished. Since that time, however, and in the spring of the present year, General Rosenbach has made the passage to Kerki in the *Czar*. In the rest of the flotilla are included two large floats or barges, capable of carrying 1,000 men apiece, which would require to be towed up-stream. These barges draw a maximum of 2 feet of water, will carry a cargo of 160 tons, and cost 5,000*l*. apiece. It is evident from these details that the Oxus flotilla, whose strength has been exaggerated in this country, is still in its infancy; and that, to whatever dimensions it may swell in the future, it cannot at present be looked upon as contributing much to the offensive strength of Russia in Central Asia.

CHAPTER VI

BOKHARA THE NOBLE

Quant il orent passé cel desert, si vindrent à une cité qui est appelée Bocara, moult noble et grant.—MARCO POLO.

Continuation of the railway to Bokhara—Scenery of the Khanate—Approach to the city—Attitude of the Bokhariots towards the railway—New Russian town—Political condition of the Khanate—Accession of the reigning Amir—Seid Abdul Ahad—Abolition of slavery—Novel security of access—History of Bokhara—Previous English visitors to Bokhara—Road from the station to the city—The Russian Embassy—Native population—Foreign elements—An industrial people—Bokharan women—Religious buildings and practice—The Great Minaret—Criminals hurled from the summit—Assassination of the Divan Begi—Torture of the murderer—Interior of the city—The Righistan—The Citadel and State prison—The Great Bazaar—Curiosities and manufactures—Brass and copper ware—Barter and currency—Russian monopoly of import trade from Europe—Russian firms in the city—Statistics of trade—Effects of the railway—Restrictions on the sale of liquor—Mussulman inebriety—Survival of ancient customs—Dr. Heyfelder—The *reshta* or guinea-worm of Bokhara—Bokharan army—Native Court and ceremonial—Tendency to incorporation—Transitional epoch at Bokhara.

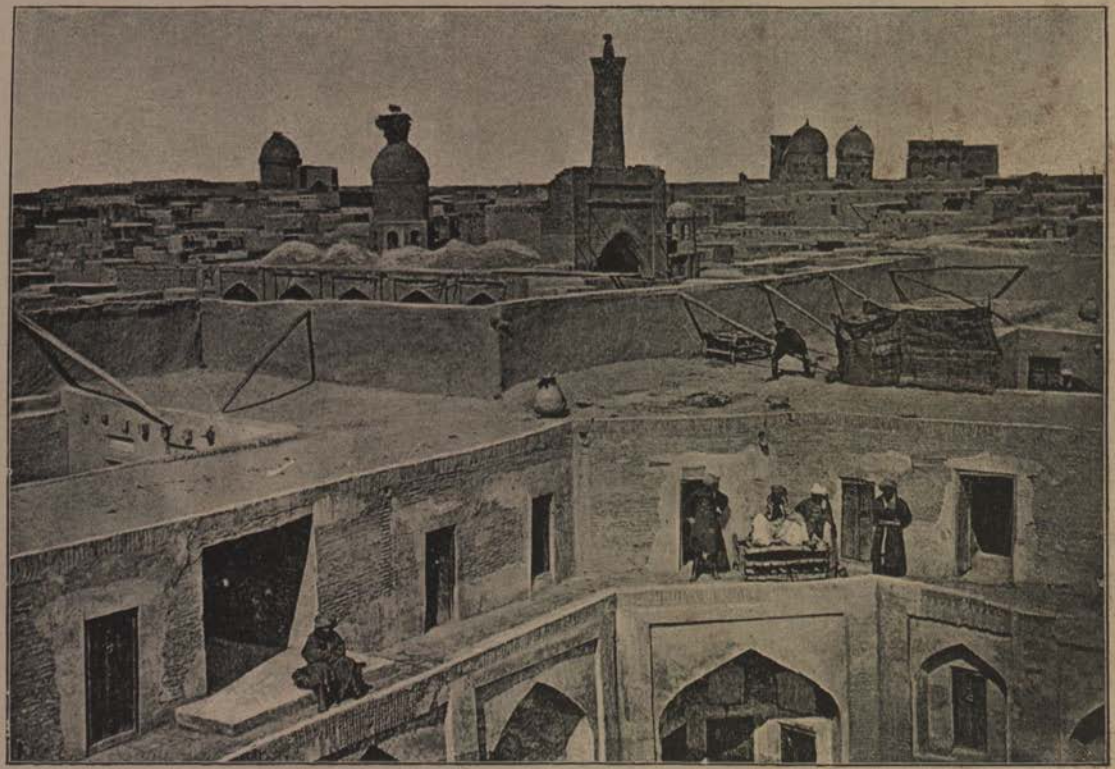
Continuation of the railway to Bokhara

I OBSERVED in the last chapter that, upon arriving at Tcharjui, we had passed from Russian on to Bokharan territory. The distinction is of course a somewhat artificial one, for though it rests upon treaty stipulations, yet Russia can do in Bokhara what she pleases, and when she humours the pretensions of Bokharan

autonomy, only does so because, being all-powerful, she can afford to be lenient. The pretence of independence was, however, kept up, so far as the construction of the railway through the territory of the Amir was concerned—the strip of country traversed by the line and the ground occupied by the station buildings being in some cases presented gratis by the good-will of the Amir, but in the majority of instances bought either from him or from the local proprietors of the soil. At that time Russian influence and credit do not appear to have been quite as omnipotent in Bokhara as they now are; for the Oriental landlords, with characteristic caution, turned up their noses at the paper rouble, and insisted upon being paid in silver, which had to be bought for the purpose in Hamburg, and transported all the way to Central Asia. I do not know whether the hypothesis of a similar transaction may be held to have explained the big padlocked bags, strongly guarded by soldiers, and evidently containing bullion, that I saw landed from our steamer at Uzun Ada.

Scenery of the Khanate

As we advanced further into the Khanate, a new country spread before us. It displayed the exuberant richness, not merely of an oasis or reclaimed desert, but of a region long and habitually fertile. Great clumps of timber afforded a spectacle unseen since the Caucasus; and large walled enclosures, overtopped with fruit-trees, marked the country residences of Bokharan squires. It was of this neighbourhood that Ibn Haukal, the Arab traveller, wrote as long ago as the tenth century: 'In all the regions of



PANORAMA OF BOKHARA

the earth there is not a more flourishing or a more delightful country than this, especially the district of Bokhara. If a person stand on the Kohendiz (*i.e.* the Castle) of Bokhara, and cast his eyes around, he shall not see anything but beautiful green and luxuriant verdure on every side; so that he would imagine the green of the earth and the azure of the heavens were united. And as there are green fields in every quarter, so there are villas interspersed among the green fields. And in all Khorasan and Maweralnahr there are not any people more long-lived than those of Bokhara.'[1] At Kara Kul, where the last surviving waters of the Zerafshan find their home in three small lakes, we reached the district so famous for its black, tightly curled lambskins, the Asiatic equivalent and superior to what in Europe we denominate Astrakhan. At the same time, curiously enough, the huge sheepskin bonnets, with which the Turkomans had rendered us familiar, disappeared in favour of the capacious white turban of the Uzbeg or the Tajik. Early in the afternoon (we had left Amu Daria at 7 A.M.) there appeared over the trees on the north of the line a tall, graceful minaret, and the spherical outline of two large domes. We were in sight of Bokhara Es Sherif, or the Noble, at the present juncture the most interesting and intact city of the East. Skirting the city, from which we cannot at one moment have been more than four miles distant, and seeming to leave it behind, we stopped at the new Russian

Approach to the city

[1] *The Oriental Geography of Ibn Haukal.* Translated by Sir William Ouseley, Knt. 1800.

station of Bokhara, situated nearly ten miles from its gates.

Attitude of the Bokhariots towards the railway

Upon inquiry I found that the station had been very deliberately planted on this site. A committee, consisting of representatives of the Russian and Bokharan Governments and of merchants of both nationalities, had met to investigate and determine the question of locality. Some of the native merchants were in favour of a site nearer the town, though the general attitude of the Bokhariots towards the railway was then one of suspicion. It was regarded as foreign, subversive, anti-national, and even Satanic. Shaitan's Arba, or the Devil's Wagon, was what they called it. Accordingly it was stipulated that the line should as far as possible avoid the cultivated land, and should pass at a distance of ten miles from the native city. This suggestion the Russians were not averse to adopting, as it supplied them with an excuse for building a rival Russian town around the station buildings, and for establishing a cantonment of troops to protect the latter, a step which might have been fraught with danger in the nearer neighbourhood of the capital. Now, however, the Bokhariots are victims to much the same regrets as the wealthy English landowners who, when the railway was first introduced in this country, opposed at any cost its passage through their property. Already when the first working train steamed into Bokhara with rolling stock and material for the continuation of the line, the natives crowded down to see it, and half in fear, half in surprise, jumped into the empty wagons.

Presently apprehension gave way to ecstasy. As soon as the line was in working order they would crowd into the open cars in hundreds, waiting for hours in sunshine, rain, or storm, for the engine to puff and the train to move. I found the third-class carriages reserved for Mussulman passengers crammed to suffocation, just as they are in India; the infantile mind of the Oriental deriving an endless delight from an excitement which he makes not the slightest effort to analyse or to solve. So great is the business now done at the station, that in September last General Annenkoff told a correspondent that since July the daily receipts from passenger and goods traffic combined had amounted to more than 300*l.* Etiquette prevents the Amir himself from travelling by a method so repugnant to Oriental tradition; but he exhibits all the interest of reluctant ignorance, and seldom interviews a Russian without enquiring about its progress.[1]

New Russian town

In a short time the new Russian town of which I have spoken will start into being. Plots of land adjoining the railway have been eagerly bought up by commercial companies, who will transfer their headquarters hither from the native city. An imposing station building had, when I visited it, risen to the height of two courses of stone above the ground. Barracks are to be built; streets will be laid out; a Residency will receive the Russian diplomatic Agent

[1] Vide 'Buchara nach und vor der transkaspischen Eisenbahn' Von Staatstrath Dr. O. Heyfelder. *Unsere Zeit*, Leipzig, October 1888.

to the Amir, who now lives in the capital under limitations arising from his restricted surroundings, and from the fact that according to Bokharan etiquette every distinguished stranger in the city, himself included, becomes *ipso facto* a guest of the Amir, and is supplied with board and lodging. In another decade the new Bokhara will have attracted to itself much of the importance of the ancient city, and with its rise and growth the prestige of the latter must inevitably decline. Thus, by a seeming concession to native sentiment, the Russians are in reality playing their own game.

Political condition of the Khanate

Before I describe my visit to the old Bokhara, I propose to append some observations upon the present political condition of the Khanate, a subject about which very scant and imperfect information appears ever to percolate to England.

The existing relations between Russia and Bokhara are defined by the two treaties of 1868 and 1873,[1] both of which were concluded between Kaufmann, on behalf of the Imperial Government, and the late Amir Mozaffur-ed-din. These treaties left Bokhara, already shorn of Samarkand and the beautiful province of Zerafshan, in a position of qualified independence, the privileges of a court and native government being conceded in return for the surrender of the waterway of the Oxus, and of certain commanding fortified positions, to Russia. So closely, however, were the Russian toils cast round the Khanate that these conditions were generally recog-

[1] For a translation of this treaty, vide Appendix V.

nised as involving ultimate absorption; and there was scarcely a single English writer who did not confidently predict that the death of the then Amir would infallibly be succeeded by total annexation. Sir Henry Rawlinson, by far the greatest English authority on Central Asia, expressed the following opinion (in an essay entitled 'Later Phases of the Central Asian Question,' written in December 1874): 'As soon as there is rapid and direct communication between the Caucasus and Turkestan, a Russian Governor-General will take the place of the Amir, and then, if we may judge by our own Afghan experience, the Russian difficulties will commence.' Mozaffur-ed-din has since died, and Turkestan is linked by a railway—the most rapid and direct of all communications—to the Caspian, and yet there is now, and is likely for some time to continue, an Amir of Bokhara. Russia has in fact played the part of (sacrificing the shadow for the sake of the substance, and of tightening the iron grip beneath the velvet glove, with such adroitness and success that she can well afford for a time to leave the Khanate of Bokhara alone, with all the trouble and expense of annexation, and to tolerate a semi-independent Amir with as much complacency as we do a Khan of Khelat or a Maharajah of Kashmir.) The analogy to Afghanistan is a faulty one, for the Bokhariots are not a turbulent or a fanatical people; and, though composed of several nationalities, present a fairly homogeneous whole.

The late Amir, who was a capable man, though a debauchee, died in 1885, leaving several sons. The

Accession of the reigning Amir

complete ascendency of Russia was well illustrated by the events that ensued. Mozaffur had solicited the recognition as his heir of his fourth son, Seid Abdul Ahad, although the offspring of a slave; and this preference had been diplomatically humoured by the Russian Government, who sent the young man to St. Petersburg (where now also they are educating his younger brother) and to Moscow, to imbibe Russian tastes and to be dazzled by the coronation of the Czar. In Eastern countries it is of the highest importance, immediately upon the occurrence of a vacancy to the throne, to have an official candidate forthcoming and to strike the first blow—a cardinal rule of action which Great Britain has uniformly neglected in her relations with Afghanistan. At the time of his father's death Abdul Ahad was Beg of Kermineh, a position which he held, even as a boy, during Schuyler's visit in 1873. The death of the old Amir was concealed for twelve hours; special messengers left at full gallop for Kermineh; the palace and troops were assured by the loyalty of the Kush-Begi or Grand Vizier, who marched out of the town to receive the new Amir. As soon as the death of Mozaffur leaked out the rumour was spread that a Russian general and army were advancing upon Bokhara; and when Abdul Ahad appeared, attended by General Annenkoff, whose presence in the vicinity had been judiciously turned to account, he entered into the inheritance of his fathers without difficulty and without striking a blow.

His eldest brother, Abdul Melik, who rebelled

KUSH BEGI AND AMIR OF BOKHARA

against his father eighteen years ago, has for some time been a fugitive in India, and is detained by the British Government at Abbotabad. Another elder brother, who was Beg of Hissar at the time of his brother's accession, and who also contemplated rebellion, was quietly removed as a State prisoner to Baisun.[1] A third, who was similarly implicated, was deprived of his Begship of Tchiraktchi and incarcerated in the capital.[2] (The opposition, if it exists, has not dared to lift its head since.)

Seid Abdul Ahad

Seid Abdul Ahad is a young man of twenty-eight or twenty-nine years of age, tall, black-bearded, and dignified in appearance. I saw him at Bokhara. Clad in magnificent robes, and riding at the head of a long cavalcade through the bazaar, he looked worthy to be an Oriental monarch. Little is publicly known of his character, which I heard variously described as inoffensive and avaricious. He is reputed among those who know him to be intelligent, and to understand the exact limits of his own independence. It is almost impossible to tell how far he is popular with his subjects, Oriental respect for the title outweighing all considerations of the personality of its bearer. Moreover, espionage is understood here, as elsewhere in the East, to play a prominent part in native *régime*, and disloyalty is too dangerous to be common. If he can persuade his people that he is still something more than a gilded marionette, as the

[1] For an account of this incident, vide M. Bonvalot's new work, *Through the Heart of Asia*, 1889, vol. i. pp. 230–1; vol. ii. p. 23.

[2] *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 23.

Russians are politic enough to allow him to do, and if at the same time he tacitly takes his orders from Tashkent, there is no reason why he should not retain his crown.

Abolition of slavery

The Russians take great credit to themselves for having persuaded the young sovereign to issue a decree, signed November 19, 1886, totally abolishing slavery in the State of Bokhara, and giving to each man a written certificate of his freedom—a step which would hardly have been necessary if Clause XVII. of the Treaty of 1873 had been at all faithfully carried out.

> The traffic in human beings, being contrary to the law which commands man to love his neighbour, is abolished for ever in the territory of the Khanate. In accordance with this resolve, the strictest injunctions shall be given by the Amir to all his Begs to enforce the new law, and special orders shall be sent to all border towns where slaves are transported for sale from neighbouring countries, that should any such slaves be brought there, they shall be taken from their owners and set at liberty without loss of time.

The relations between the two courts are in the capable hands of M. Tcharikoff, a most accomplished man, speaking English fluently—the result of an early Edinburgh education—and a thorough master of Oriental politics.

Novel security of access

It was with no small astonishment that I found myself in the agreeable company of Dr. Heyfelder, approaching without let or hindrance the to Englishmen almost unknown city of Bokhara. I remembered having read in a notice in the 'Westminster Review' of 'Vambéry's Travels' the words written only thirteen

years ago, 'The very names of Khiva, Bokhara, and Samarkand are so associated with danger and difficulty that no European who is not prepared to take his life in his hand can venture to visit them.' Even at Tiflis but a few weeks before, M. Henri Moser, the Swiss traveller, who six years ago visited Central Asia, and in 1886 published a most vivid and admirable account of his travels, entitled 'A travers l'Asie Centrale,' had warned me to be careful of the fanaticism of Bokhara, and had expressed a doubt as to whether a foreigner could obtain permission to enter the city. When he was there in 1883 himself, though in the company of a special envoy from the Czar, he remained a virtual prisoner indoors for three weeks, and was only once allowed to make an excursion through the town. I also remembered having read in the essay, already quoted, by Sir H. Rawlinson, 'No one questions but that the general feeling at Bokhara is intensely hostile to Russia, and that the Amir has had and still has the utmost difficulty in preventing his subjects from breaking out and declaring a holy war against the infidels.' And yet here was I, a stranger, and not even a Russian, approaching in absolute security this so-called haunt of bigotry, and about to spend several days in leisurely observation of its life and people.

History of Bokhara

Identified by some writers with the Bazaria of Quintus Curtius, where in the winter of B.C. 328, in the royal Chace or Paradise that had not been disturbed for four generations, Alexander the Great and his officers slew 4,000 animals, and where Alexander

himself overcame a lion in single combat, extorting from the Spartan envoy the exclamation, 'Well done, Alexander, nobly hast thou won the prize of kingship from the king of the woods!'—generally derived from the Sanskrit name Vihara, or a college of wise men, associated in local legend with the mythical hero Afrasiab—there is little doubt that Bokhara is one of the most ancient cities in the East. Since it emerged into the light of history about 700 A.D., it has been alternately the spoil of the most famous conquerors and the capital of the greatest kings. Under the Iranian Samanid dynasty, who ruled for 130 years till 1000 A.D., it was regarded as a pillar of Islam and as the pride of Asia. Students flocked to its universities, where the most learned *mullahs* lectured; pilgrims crowded its shrines. A proverb said, 'In all other parts of the world light descends upon earth, from holy Bokhara it ascends.' Well-built canals carried streams of water through the city; luxuriant fruit-trees cast a shadow in its gardens; its silkworms spun the finest silk in Asia; its warehouses overflowed with carpets and brocades; the commerce of the East and West met and changed hands in its caravanserais; and the fluctuations of its market determined the exchange of the East. The Samanids were succeeded by the Turki Seljuks and the princes of Kharezm; and then, like a storm from the desert, there swept down upon Bokhara the pitiless fury of the Mongol, engulfing all in a like cataclysm of ruin. Jagatai and Oktai, sons of Jenghiz Khan, made some amends, by beneficent and merciful rule, for the atrocities of

their father;) and it was about this time that the elder brothers Polo, making their first voyage to the East, 'si vindrent à une cité qui est appelée Bocara, moult noble et grant.' A change of ownership occurred when about 1400 the great conqueror Timur—great, whether we regard him as savage, as soldier, or as statesman—overran the East, and established a Tartar dynasty that lasted a hundred years—a period which has been termed the Bokharan Renaissance. Another wave of conquest, the Uzbeg Tartars, ensued, again bringing to the surface two great names—that of Sheibani Mehemmed Khan, who overthrew the Timurid sovereigns and established an ethnical ascendency that has lasted ever since; and Abdullah Khan, the national hero of Bokhara, which owed to his liberal tastes much of its later architectural glory, its richly endowed colleges and its material prosperity. Subsequent dynasties, exhibiting a sorrowful record of incapacity, fanaticism, and decay, witnessed the gradual contraction of the once mighty empire of Transoxiana into a petty khanate. It is true that Bokhara still refers with pride to the rule of Amir Maasum, founder of the present or Manghit reigning family in 1784; but a bigoted devotee, wearing the dress and imitating the life of a dervish, was a poor substitute for the mighty sovereigns of the past. The dissolution of the times, yearly sinking into a deeper slough of vice, venality, and superstition, was fitly expressed in the character and reign of his grandson, the infamous Nasrullah (1826–1860), whose son, Mozaffur-ed-din (1860–1885), successively the foe,

the ally, and the puppet of Russia, has left to his heir, the reigning Amir, a capital still breathing some aroma of its ancient glory, but a power whose wings have been ruthlessly clipped, and a kingdom indebted for a nominal independence to the calculating prudence rather than to the generosity of Russia.

Previous English visitors to Bokhara

English imagination has for centuries been stirred by the romantic associations of Bokhara, but English visitors have rarely penetrated to the spot. The first who reached its walls was the enterprising merchant Master Anthony Jenkinson, who was despatched on several adventurous expeditions to the East between 1557 and 1572, acting in the double capacity of ambassador to Queen Elizabeth and agent to the Muscovy Trading Company, which had been formed to open up the trade with the East. He stayed two and a half months in the city in the winter of 1558–59, being treated with much consideration by the sovereign, Abdullah Khan; and has left a record of his journey and residence in Bokhara, the facts of which display a minute correspondence (at which no one acquainted with the magnificent immobility of the East would express surprise) with the customs and manners of to-day.[1] In the eighteenth century the record was limited to two names—Colonel Garber in 1732, and Mr. George Thompson in 1741.[2] In this

[1] *Early Voyages in Russia and Persia.* By Anthony Jenkinson and other Englishmen. Edited for the Hakluyt Society by E. D. Morgan, 1886.

[2] Vide Professor Grigorieff's criticism of Vambéry's *History of Bokhara*, in the Appendix to Schuyler's *Turkistan*, vol. i. I can ascertain nothing about Col. Garber (or Harber) beyond the mention of his name. Professor Grigorieff was mistaken in coupling the name

century William Moorcroft and George Trebeck, at the end of six years' wanderings from India, through Kashmir, Afghanistan, and Turkestan, reached Bokhara on February 25, 1825; leaving the city five months later only to die, the one at Andkui, the other at Mazar-i-Sherif.[1] In 1832 Lieutenant, afterwards Sir Alexander Burnes, succeeded in reaching Bokhara also from India, in company with Dr. James Gerard, and in concluding a treaty of commerce with the Amir.[2] Then in 1842 came the horrible tragedy which has inscribed the names of Stoddart and Conolly in the martyrology of English pioneers in the East. Sent in 1838 and 1840 upon a mission of diplomatic negotiation to the khanates of Central Asia, whose sympathies Great Britain desired to enlist in consequence of her advance into Afghanistan, they were thrown by the monster Nasrullah into a foul subterranean pit, infested with vermin, were subjected to abominable torture, and finally were publicly beheaded in 1842. Dr. Wolff, the missionary, travelling to Bokhara in 1843, in order to clear up their

of Reynold Hogg with that of Thompson. The two travelled together as far as Khiva (*viâ* Samara and the Aral Sea); but while Thompson pushed on to Bokhara, Hogg remained behind, and with great difficulty, being plundered in the steppe, escaped at length to Orenburg. Vide *An Historical Account of the British Trade over the Caspian Sea.* By Jonas Hanway, merchant, 1753, vol. i. pp. 345-52.

[1] *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces, &c.* By Mr. William Moorcroft and Mr. George Trebeck, from 1819 to 1825. 2 vols. 1841. The editor, who published these travels fifteen years after the authors' death, omitted any account of Moorcroft's stay at Bokhara, both because the latter's notes were very desultory and imperfect, and because Burnes had published his work in the interim.

[2] *Travels into Bokhara.* By Lieut. Alexander Burnes. 3 vols. 1835. Burnes' account of Bokhara is still one of the best extant.

fate, ran many risks, but at length escaped with his life. For forty years, however, owing partly to the terror inspired by this disaster and to the perils of the journey, partly to the increasing influence of Russia, who did not encourage English intruders upon her new preserves, not a single Englishman set foot in Bokhara. A deep mystery overhung the place like a cloud, from which occasionally peeped the glint of Russian arms, or rang the voice of Russian cannon. A flash of light was thrown upon the prevailing darkness about half-way through this period by the heroic voyage of the Hungarian Vambéry, who penetrated to Bokhara in the garb of a mendicant dervish in 1863, and whose work, being published in English, awoke a profound sensation in this country.[1] In 1873, Dr. Schuyler, the American, visited Bokhara under Russian patronage, in his tour through the Czar's dominions in Central Asia, and wrote a work which may be described as monumental, and is still a classic on the subject.[2] Dr. Lansdell, the so-called missionary, was the next English visitor after Wolff, in 1882. I do not know of any others till the small batch who have obtained leave to go since the Transcaspian Railway was made, and whose experience it is my object to relate.

Road from the station to the city

Upon our arrival at the station we committed ourselves to a *calèche* drawn by a *troika*, or team of three horses abreast, which had been sent down from the Russian Embassy in the city to meet us, and

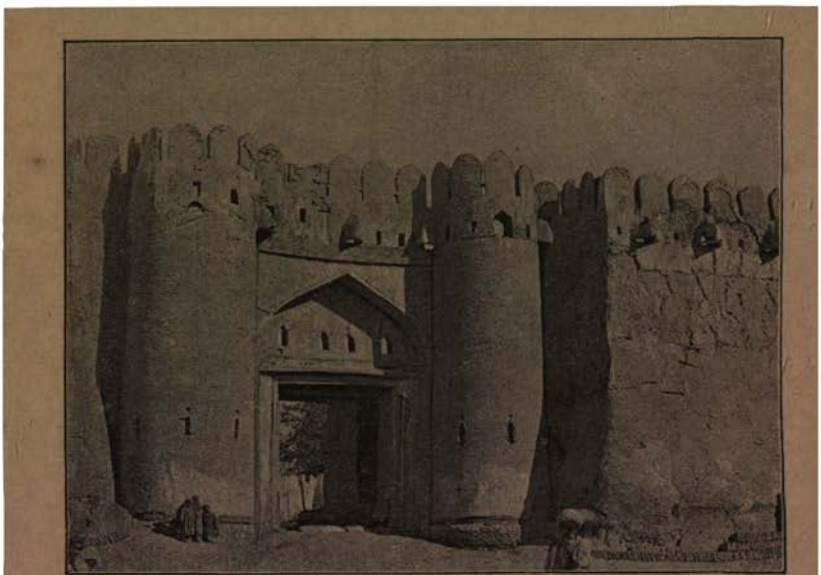
[1] *Travels in Central Asia.* By Arminius Vambéry. 1864.
[2] *Turkistan.* By Eugene Schuyler. 2 vols. 1876.

started for the capital. But for this good fortune we might have been compelled to make the journey either on donkey-back or in one of the huge wooden springless carts of the country called *arbas*, the wheels of which are from eight to ten feet high, and on whose elevated floor the natives squat contentedly, while the driver, usually seated on a saddle on the horse's back, urges the vehicle in the most casual manner over inequalities that would upset any less clumsy construction. Donkeys appeared to be the most popular method of locomotion, it being considered undignified in that country to walk. Two and even three men sit astride of the same diminutive animal, dangling their legs to the ground; or a bearded veteran, with his knees tilted up to his chin by the ridiculously short stirrups, would be seen perched upon a heap of saddle-bags, with a blue bale reared up behind him, which closer inspection revealed to be a daughter or a wife. Blinding clouds of dust, stirred by the great traffic, rolled along the road, which lay between orchards of mulberries, peaches, figs, and vines, or between fields in which the second grain crop of the year was already springing, or where hundreds of ripe melons littered the ground. We passed through several villages of low clay houses where dusty trees overhung the dry watercourses and thirsty camels stood about the wells, skirted a summer palace of the Amir surrounded by a mighty wall of sun-dried clay, and at length saw drawn out in a long line before us the lofty ramparts of the city, with buttresses and towers,

eight miles round, and pierced by eleven gates, open from sunrise to sunset, but hermetically closed at that hour against either exit or entrance till the morrow.[1]

The Russian Embassy

Entering by one of these, the Sallia Khaneh, we made our way for over two miles through a bewildering labyrinth of streets and alleys to the Russian



GATE AND WALL OF BOKHARA.

Embassy, situated near the Ughlan Gate, at the far end of the city. This is a large native house with an extensive fruit garden surrounded by a clay wall, which was lent to the Russians by the Amir, who had confiscated it from its former owner, both for

[1] A plan of Bokhara, as also of Samarkand, is given in the Russian original, but not, unfortunately, in the English translation, of Khanikoff's work.

their own accommodation and for the entertainment of all distinguished guests. The servants, horses, grocery, and food are supplied by the Amir, one of whose officers, called the *Mirakhur* (literally Amir Akhor, *i.e.* Master of the Horse), lives in the outer court, and sits for the most part of the day smoking a pipe and tranquilly surveying operations. In one court are picketed the horses of the Russian guard,

RUSSIAN EMBASSY AT BOKHARA.

consisting of twenty Cossacks of the Ural. In the next are several guest-chambers, whose furniture consists of a carpet, a rope bedstead, and a table; and in a third are the offices and reception-rooms of the Embassy, all on a scale of similar unpretentiousness and in pure native style. On our table was spread every morning a *dastarkhan* (literally table-napkin) or collation of sugarplums, dried raisins, sweetmeats, and little cakes, together with a huge

flat slab of brown bread—the traditional hospitality of the Amir. We never knew what to do with these dainties, which were not altogether to English taste, and the various plates with their contents became quite a nuisance. Washing was rather a difficulty, because the only jug known to the natives is a brass ewer, which holds about as much as a teapot; and the only basin a receptacle with a small bowl in the middle of a large brim, the idea being that it is sufficient for water to be poured over the hands to ensure ablution. I created a great sensation with an indiarubber bath. Every morning the attendants brought in the provisions of the day for the entire household, consisting of mutton, chickens, and fruit; but the uncertain arrival and quantity of these rendered the hour of meals rather precarious. We were most hospitably welcomed by the Russian *attaché*, who, in the absence of M. Tcharikoff, the Resident, was acting as *chargé d'affaires*. He seemed to be overwhelmed with business, and deputations of the Amir's ministers, and other gorgeously robed officials were coming in and out the entire day. If we lost our way in the town, which it was almost impossible not to do, we had only to mention Eltchikhaneh, the name of the Embassy, to be at once shown the direction. I remember that as we reached our destination the sun was sinking. As its last rays lit up the horizon and threw the outline of dome and tower into picturesque relief, there rang through the cool calm air a chorus of piercing cries. The muezzins from a hundred minarets were calling the people

to the Namaz, or evening prayer. In Bokhara, where the Mussulmans affect to be great purists, the Ezan, as it is called, is recited instead of chanted, the latter being thought a heterodox corruption. For a minute or two the air is a Babel of sound. Then all sinks into silence and the shadows descend. At night the only sound is the melancholy beat of the watchman's drum as he patrols the streets with a lantern, no one being suffered abroad at that hour.

Native population

Bokhara is still a great city, for it numbers approximately one hundred thousand souls. Of these only one hundred and fifty are Europeans, nearly all of them Russians, Germans, or Poles. The bulk of the native population are Tajiks, the aboriginal Iranian stock, who may generally be distinguished from their Tartar brethren by the clearness and often by the brightness of their complexions, by the light colour of their hair and beards, sometimes a chestnut or reddish-brown, and by their more refined features. Tajik and Uzbeg alike are a handsome race, and a statelier urban population I never saw than in the streets and bazaars of the town. Every man grows a beard and wears an abundant white turban, consisting in the case of the orthodox of forty folds, and a long robe or *khalat* of striped cotton, or radiant silk, or parti-coloured cotton and silk. Bokhara has long set the fashion in Central Asia in the matter of dress, and is the great clothes mart of the East. Here the richness of Oriental fancy has expressed itself in the most daring but artistic combinations of colour. The brightest crimson and blue and purple

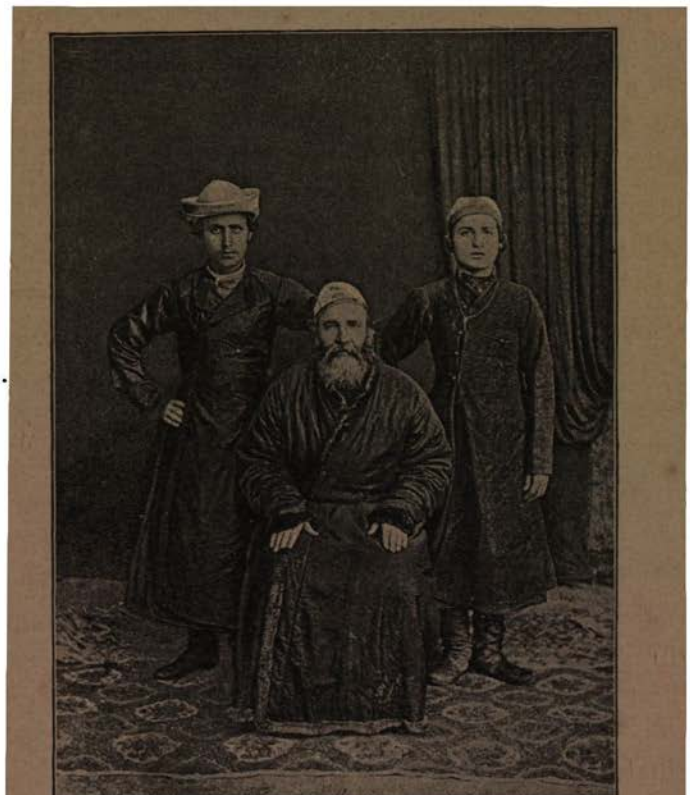
and orange are juxtaposed or interlaced; and in Bokhara Joseph would have been looked upon as the recipient of no peculiar favour in the gift of a coat of many colours. Too often there is the most glaring contrast between the splendour of the exterior and the poverty that it covers. Many of the people are wretchedly poor; but living is absurdly cheap, and your pauper, undaunted by material woes, walks abroad with the dignity of a patriarch and in the garb of a prince.

Foreign elements

Foreign elements are mingled in great numbers in the population. Slavery brought the Persians in old days to the Bokharan market, and has bequeathed to freedom their children and grandchildren. Usury brings the Hindus or Multani, as they are called, from a prevalent idea that Multan is the capital of India. With their dark complexions and lank black locks, with their tight dress and red caste marks on the forehead,[1] they are an unmistakable lot. Living in caravanserais without wives or families they lead an unsocial existence and return to their country as soon as they have made their fortune. Neighbourhood brings the Kirghiz, the Turkomans, and the Afghans. Business brings to Bokhara, as it has taken all over the world, the Jews, who are here a singularly handsome people of mild feature and benign aspect. Confined to an Oriental *ghetto* and for long cruelly persecuted in Bokhara, they still

[1] It is of the Hindus of Bokhara that Dr. Lansdell makes the astonishingly ingenuous remark: 'They paint a red circle, about two inches in diameter, on their forehead, *whether by compulsion or for glory and beauty I know not.*'—*Russian Central Asia*, vol. ii. p. 101.

exhibit in their prescribed dress and appearance the stamp of a peculiar people. The head is shaven save for two long locks hanging in a curl on either temple; they wear a square black calico bonnet



JEWS OF BOKHARA.

trimmed with Astrakhan border, and a girdle round the waist. To my astonishment I met with one who could speak a little French.

One thing impressed itself very forcibly on my mind, namely, that Bokhara is not now a haunt of

An industrial people

zealots, but a city of merchants. It contains a peaceful, industrious, artisan population utterly unfitted for war, and as wanting in martial instinct as in capacity. The hostility to strangers, and particularly to Christians, sometimes degenerating into the grossest fanaticism, upon which earlier travellers have enlarged, has either disappeared from closer contact with civilisation, or is prudently disguised. I attribute it rather to the former cause, and to the temperate conduct of the Russians in their dealings with the natives; because not even when I wandered about alone, and there was no motive for deception, did I observe the smallest indication of antagonism or repugnance. Many a face expressed that blank and haughty curiosity which the meanest Oriental can so easily assume; but I met with no rudeness or interference. On the contrary, the demeanour of the people was friendly, and no one when interrogated declined to answer a question. An acquaintance of the previous day would salute you as you passed by placing his hand on his breast and stroking his beard. I never quite knew what to do on these occasions. For not having a beard to stroke, I feared it might be thought undignified or contrary to etiquette to finger the empty air.

Bokharan women

I have frequently been asked since my return—it is the question which an Englishman always seems to ask first—what the women of Bokhara were like? I am utterly unable to say. I never saw the features of one between the ages of ten and fifty. The little girls ran about, unveiled, in loose silk frocks, and

wore their hair in long plaits escaping from a tiny skull-cap. Similarly the old hags were allowed to exhibit their innocuous charms, on the ground, I suppose, that they could excite no dangerous emotions. But the bulk of the female population were veiled in a manner that defied and even repelled scrutiny. For not only were the features concealed behind a heavy black horsehair veil, falling from the top of the head to the bosom, but their figures were loosely wrapped up in big blue cotton dressing-gowns, the sleeves of which are not used but are pinned together over the shoulders at the back and hang down to the ground, where from under this shapeless mass of drapery appear a pair of feet encased in big leather boots. After this I should be more or less than human if I were to speak enthusiastically of the Bokharan ladies. Not even the generous though fanciful interpretation of Moore, who sang of

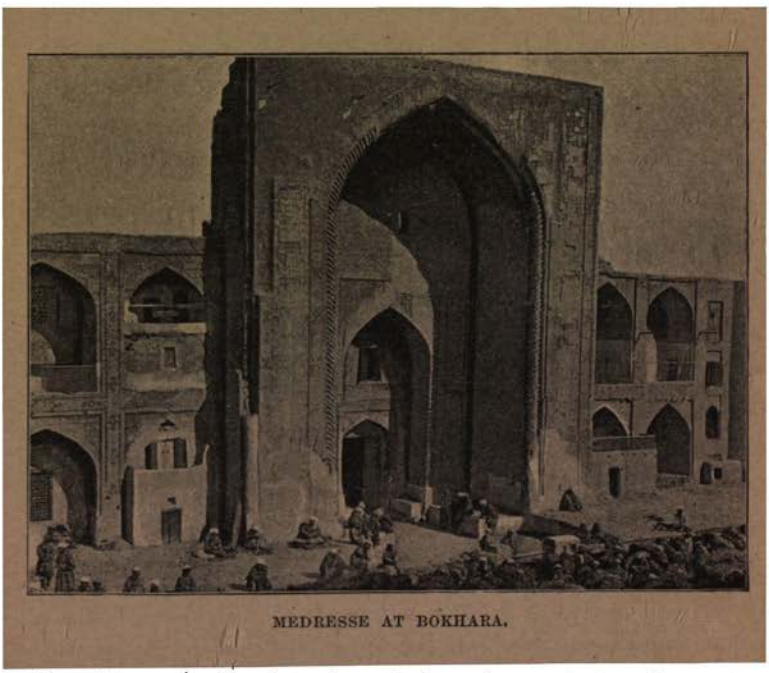
> that deep blue melancholy dress
> Bokhara's maidens wear in mindfulness
> Of friends or kindred, dead, or far away,

could reconcile me to so utter an abnegation of feminine duty.

Religious buildings and practice

From the people I pass to the city. In a place so arrogant of its spiritual reputation, it is not surprising that religious edifices should abound. Their number has, however, been greatly exaggerated. A devout Sunnite of Bokhara boasts that he can worship Allah in a different mosque on each day of the year. But this number must probably be halved. Similarly

the alleged total of one hundred and sixty *medresses*, or religious colleges, is about double the actual figure. Both mosque and *medresse* are, with scarce an exception, in a state of great dilapidation and decay; the beautiful enamelled tiles, bearing in blue and white characters texts from the Koran, having fallen or been stripped from the lofty *pishtaks* or



MEDRESSE AT BOKHARA.

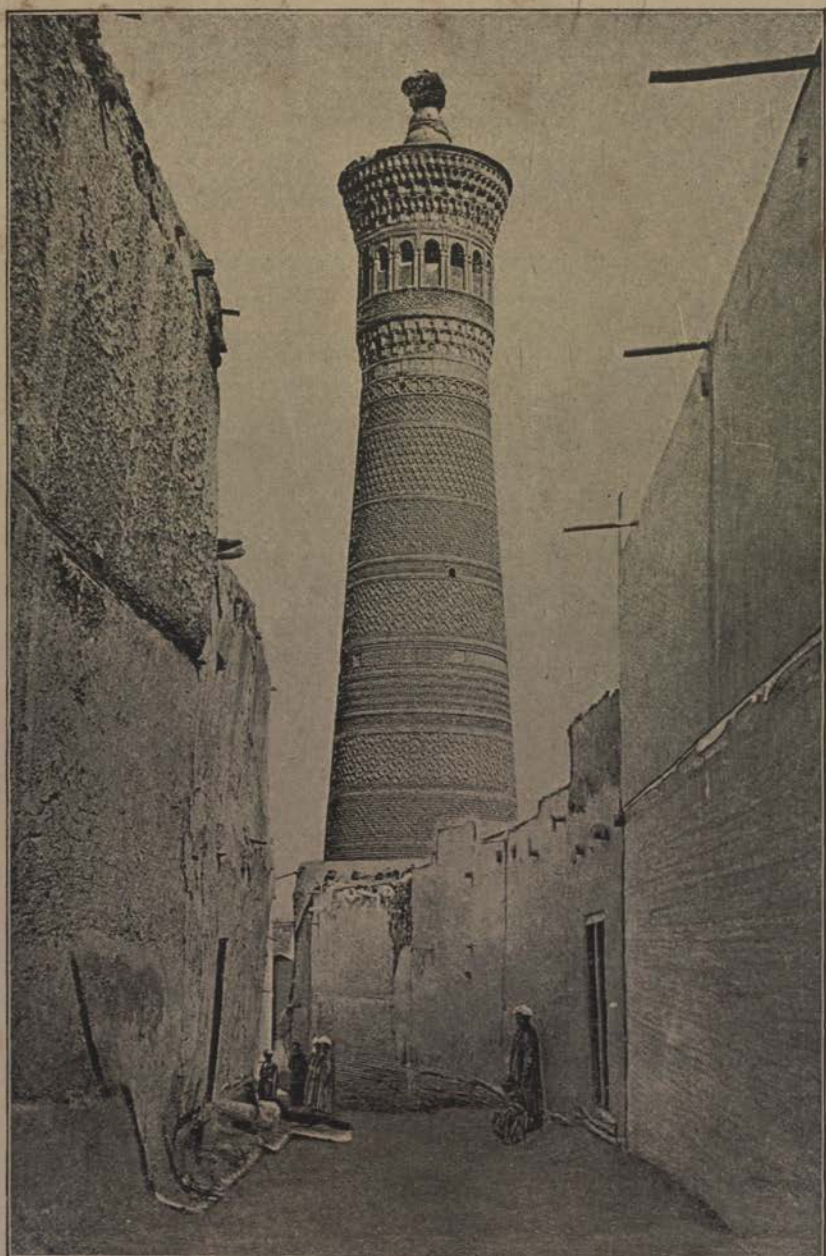
façades, and the interiors being in a state of great squalor. In a panorama of the city are conspicuous three domes covered with azure tiles. One of these belongs to the great mosque Musjid Baliand, or Kalian, variously reported to have been built or restored by Timur, where the Jumma, or Friday service, is held, attended by the Amir, and in the presence,

theoretically, of the entire population. The mosque consists of a vast open court surrounded by a double and sometimes a triple colonnade. Here it was that in 1219 Jenghiz Khan, riding into the mosque, and, being told that it was the House of God, dismounted, ascended the pulpit, and flinging the Koran on to the ground, cried out: 'The hay is cut; give your horses fodder'—a permission which his savage horde quickly interpreted as authority for a wholesale massacre. The two other domes surmount the largest *medresse* of Miri Arab, standing opposite, said to contain one hundred and fourteen cells, and to have attached to it two hundred and thirty *mullahs*, and exhibiting in its structural detail the best decorative work in Bokhara. These buildings are typical of the religious life and even of the faith of the people, which, in the degradation of morals so conspicuous in the East of this century, and partly owing to contact with a civilisation whose politic avoidance of proselytism or persecution has encouraged indifference, have become a hollow form, veiling hypocrisy and corruption. The fanaticism of the dervishes or *kalendars*, as they are called in the 'Arabian Nights,' of whom there used to be many orders in Bokhara, living in *tekkehs* or convents, and who stirred a dangerous bigotry by their wild movements and appeals, has subsided or taken the form of a mendicancy which, if unattractive, does not threaten a breach of the peace. Religious toleration, inculcated on the one side, has developed on the other with an astonishing rapidity.

The Great Minaret

Between the Musjid Baliand and the Miri Arab rises the tapering shaft of the Minari Kalian, or Great Minaret, whence criminals are thrown headlong, and which no European had hitherto been allowed to ascend. I have since heard that in the early part of the present year this rule was for the first time in history relaxed. The tower, which we had already seen from the railway, and which reminded me somewhat of the celebrated Kutub Minar, near Delhi, is nearly two hundred feet high, and is built of concentric rows of bricks stamped with decorative patterns, and converging towards the summit, where is an open gallery, on the roof of which reposes an enormous stork's nest. Some natives sitting at the base informed me that the keys were not forthcoming, but that on Fridays the doors flew mysteriously open. Their refusal to allow Christians to mount to the top has always been attributed to the fear that from that height sacrilegious eyes, looking down upon the flat roofs of the town, might probe a little too deeply the secrets of female existence. I succeeded in obtaining a very fair panorama of the city by climbing to one of the highest points of the numerous cemeteries scattered throughout the place.[1] From there was spread out around me a wilderness of flat clay roofs, above whose level surface towered the Ark or citadel, built on a lofty mound, the Great Minaret, the ruined *pishtaks* of *medresses*, and the turquoise domes.

[1] Khanikoff says there are thirteen inside the city walls. Burnes, by an extraordinary oversight, appears to have overlooked them; and yet they are a very noticeable feature.



THE GREAT MINARET

Criminals hurled from the summit

The Minari Kalian is still used for public execution, three criminals—a false coiner, a matricide, and a robber—having expiated their offences in this summary fashion during the last three years. Judgment is pronounced by the native tribunals, with whose jurisdiction the Russians have not made the smallest effort to interfere. The execution is fixed for a bazaar day, when the adjoining streets and the square at the base of the tower are crowded with people. The public crier proclaims aloud the guilt of the condemned man and the avenging justice of the sovereign. The culprit is then hurled from the summit, and, spinning through the air, is dashed to pieces on the hard ground at the base.

Assassination of the Divan Begi

This mode of punishment, whose publicity and horror are well calculated to act as a deterrent among an Oriental population, is not the only surviving proof that the nineteenth century can scarcely be considered as yet to have got a firm hold upon Bokhara. But a short time before my visit the Divan Begi, second Minister of the Crown, eldest son of the Kush Begi, or Grand Vizier—the crafty old man who for many years has guided the policy of the Khanate, and whose memory extends back to the times of Stoddart and Conolly—was publicly assassinated by an Afghan in the streets. He was shot with two bullets, and soon after expired. Various explanations were given of this tragedy, one theory being that it was an act of private revenge for a recent official seizure of the murderer's property on account of taxes which he had refused to pay. Others contended that it was

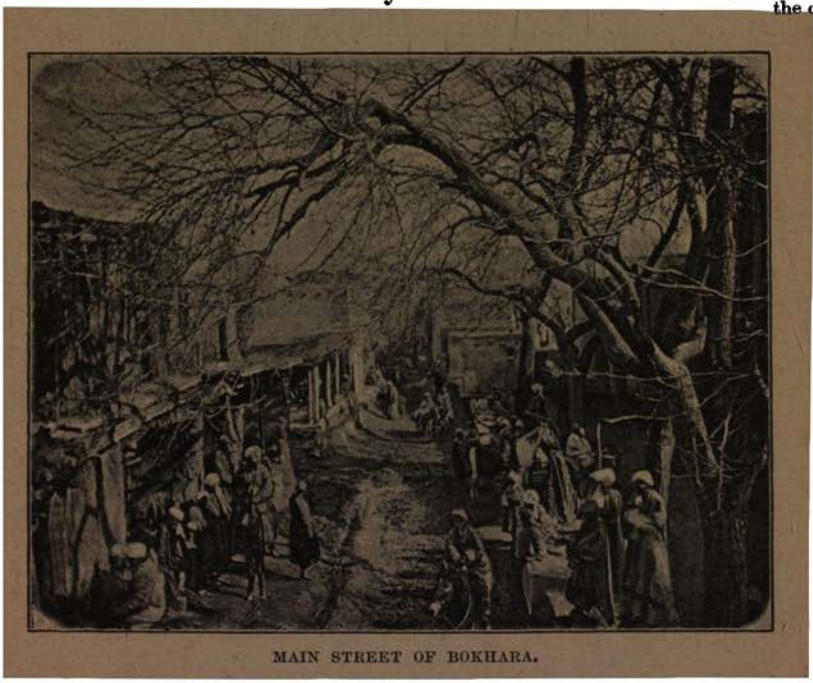
due to religious animosity, excited by the Persian descent and Shiite heresy of the slain man—his father, the Kush Begi, having been a Persian slave who rose to eminence by marrying a cast-off wife of the late Amir. But there seemed to be sufficient reason for believing that the act was really an expiring effort of outraged patriotism, the blow being directed against the minister who was supposed to be mainly responsible for the Russophile tendencies of the Government, and who had inflamed the indignation of the more bigoted of his countrymen by countenancing the advent of the railway, and thus setting the seal upon Bokharan humiliation. Whichever of these explanations be correct, the murderer was successful in his object, but paid the penalty by a fate consecrated in the immemorial traditions of Bokhara, though a startling incident under the new *régime*.

Torture of the murderer

He was handed over by the Amir to the relatives of the murdered man that they might do with him what they willed. By them he was beaten with sticks and stabbed with knives. Accounts vary as to the actual amount of torture inflicted upon the miserable wretch; but it is said that his eyelids were cut off or his eyes gouged out. In this agonising condition he was tied to the tail of an ass and dragged through the streets of the town to the market-place, where his body was quartered and thrown to the dogs. It is consoling to know that this brutal atrocity—the *vendetta* of the East, the old savage law of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth—was enacted in the absence of the Russian Resident, who, it is to be hoped,

would have interfered to prevent its accomplishment had he been upon the spot.

The interior of the city is a wilderness of crooked Interior of the city



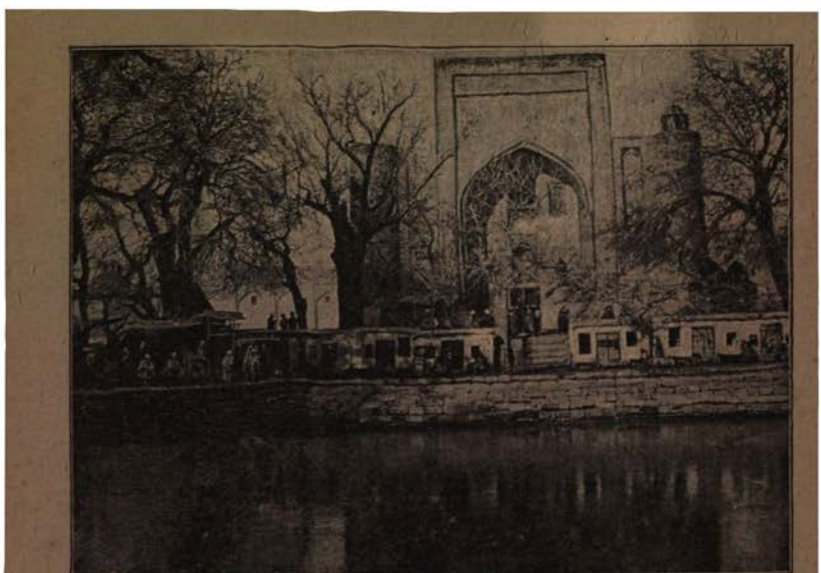
MAIN STREET OF BOKHARA.

alleys, winding irregularly between the blind walls of clay-built houses, which are without windows and have no aperture in their front but closely barred wooden doors. Trees line one of the principal streets and hang above the frequent tanks and pools, which are neither so large, so well filled, or so clean as those in Indian towns. On the contrary, the water is often low and stagnant; and if the pool is in the neighbourhood of a mosque, being considered holy, it is used for drinking as well as for washing purposes, and spreads the germs of the various endemic

diseases. The largest of these reservoirs is the Liabehaus Divan Begi, near one of the most frequented mosques. Eight rows of stone steps descend to the water, in which men are always dipping their hands. The surrounding space is a popular lounge; and cooked meats, confectionery, fruits, and tea are dispensed from rows of stalls under an avenue of mulberry-trees.

The Righistan

From dawn to sunset the largest crowd is collected in the Righistan or market-place in the north-west of the town.[1] Every square foot of the surface is



LIABEHAUS DIVAN BEGI.

occupied by stalls and booths, which are frequently shaded by awnings of woven reed balanced on poles

[1] Burnes' account (*Travels into Bokhara*, vol. ii.) of the varied sights and peoples in the Righistan is still the best.

like the umbrellas of the *fakirs* on the banks of the Ganges at Benares. Here men come to buy provisions, meat, flowers, and fruit. The butchers' counters are covered with the *kundiuks* or fat rumps of the so-called big-tailed sheep, of which Marco Polo said, six hundred years ago, that 'they weigh thirty pounds and upwards, and are fat and excellent to eat.' Blocks of rose-coloured rock salt from the mines near Karshi were exposed in great abundance. Flowers appeared to be very popular, and many of the men wore a sprig of yellow blossom stuck behind the ear. Street vendors of meat went about shouting their wares, which consisted of *kebobs* and patties on trays. Fruit was extraordinarily luxuriant and good. Magnificent melons were sold at not more than a farthing apiece; and the price of luscious white grapes was only a rouble (two shillings) for eight pouds, or 288 English lbs. Peaches, apricots, and the celebrated Bokharan plums were not then in season. Not far away was the horse and donkey market; a horse might be bought for any price from 5*s.* to 30*l.*; but a very respectable animal would cost about 10*l.*

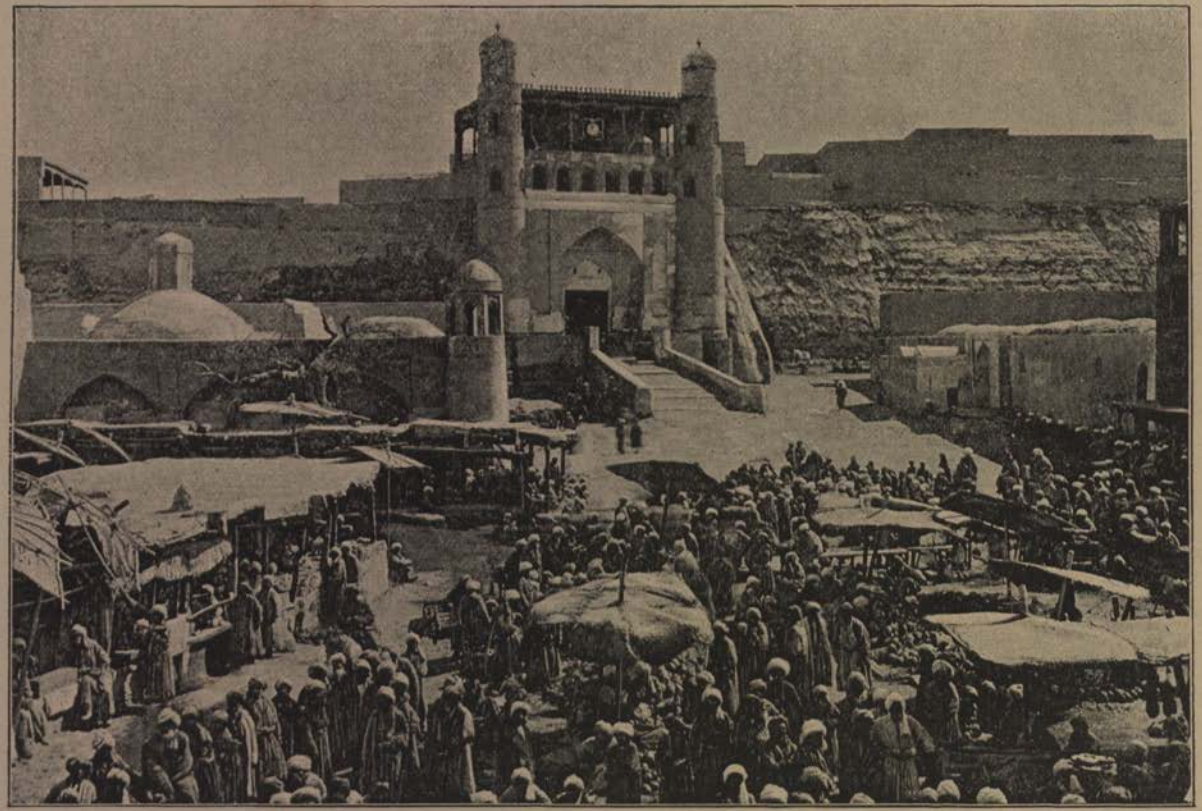
The Citadel and State prison

At the extremity of the Righistan rises the Ark or Citadel, originally built by Alp Arslan, over 800 years ago, upon a lofty natural elevation a mile in circumference, and surrounded by a high battlemented wall. The entrance gateway, erected by Nadir Shah in 1742, is approached by a paved slope and leads between two towers, above which is fixed the European clock made for the tyrant Nasrullah by the Italian prisoner,

Giovanni Orlandi, as the ransom for his life.[1] Within the Ark are situated the palaces of the Amir and the Kush Begi, the Treasury, the public offices, three mosques, and the State prison. Sauntering out one morning quite early I endeavoured to penetrate into its interior, but was stopped and sent back by the frowns and gesticulations of a crowd of natives seated in the doorway. Somewhere in this pile of buildings was the horrible hole, or bug-pit, into which Stoddart and Conolly were thrown. It is said for some time to have been sealed up, though the fact that quite recently this was a common mode of Bokharan punishment is proved by the experience of the French travellers MM. Bonvalot and Capus, who visited the Bokharan fortress of Karshi in 1882, and were shown there a subterranean hole from which a sickening stench exhaled, and in which they heard the clank of chains, and saw the uplifted despairing hands of the poor wretches immured below.[2] The 'Times' correspondent who visited Bokhara a few months before I did was shown a part of the existing Zindan or prison, which he described in a letter to the 'Times' (October 2, 1888). But either the officials must have had intimation of his visit, or he was not shown the worst part; for one of my companions, being admitted without warning, found one hundred prisoners huddled together in a low room, and chained to each other by iron collars round their necks, wooden manacles on

[1] For the pathetic story of this man, vide Schuyler's *Turkistan*, vol. ii. p. 90.

[2] *En Asie Centrale. De Moscou en Bactriane*, p. 111.



THE RIGHISTAN OF BOKHARA

their hands, and fetters on their feet, so that they could neither stand nor turn nor scarcely move. The Zindan, however, is not the same as the Kana Khaneh, where Stoddart was tortured; nor must the dungeon, now covered up with a slab in the floor of the former, which the 'Times' correspondent was shown, be confused with the famous bug-pit. The Zindan with its two compartments, the upper and lower (*i.e.* subterranean) dungeons, were and are outside the Ark. The Kana Khaneh was inside it, near the entrance from the Righistan.[1] M. Tcharikoff, the Resident, told me at Tashkent that the present Amir upon his accession shut up one of these prisons, the hundred and thirteen criminals who had long lain there being brought out, some of them beaten, and a few executed, but the majority released; and it may have been to the Ab Khaneh, with its *annexe* the Kana Khaneh, that he referred. However this be, the facts I have related will show that there still remains much to be done in mitigating the barbarity of native rule.

The Great Bazaar

At all hours the most interesting portion of the city is the Tcharsu, or Great Bazaar, one of the largest and most important in the East. It covers a vast extent of ground, and is said to consist of thirty or forty separate bazaars, of twenty-four caravanserais for the storage of goods and accommodation of merchants, and of six *timis*, or circular vaulted spaces, from which radiate the principal alleys, shaded with mats from the sun, and crowded with human beings on donkey-back, on horseback, and on foot. Huge

[1] Vide Khanikoff (translation), pp. 101-2.

arbas crash through the narrow streets and just shave the counters on either hand. Behind these, in small cupboard-like shops, squat the Oriental tradesmen surrounded by their wares. Long lines of splendid camels laden with bales of cotton march superciliously along, attached to each other by a rope bound round the nose, the cartilage of which is forbidden to be pierced, in the familiar fashion of the East, by a humane decree of the late Amir.

Curiosities and manufactures

In different parts we may see the armourers' shops, the turners' shops, where the workman turns a primitive lathe by the aid of a bowstring; the vendors of brightly painted red and green wooden saddles with tremendous pommels inlaid with ivory; of *shabraques*, or saddlecloths, a speciality of Bokhara, made of crimson velvet gorgeously embroidered with gold and silver thread, and powdered with silver spangles; of black, curly lambskin fleeces from Kara Kul; of leather belts stuck with knives; of the bright green tobacco or snuff which the natives chew with great avidity, and which is carried in a tiny gourd fastened with a stopper; of pottery, coarse in texture but spirited in design; of water-pipes, or *tchilim*, in which two tubes project from a brass-mounted gourd, one of them holding the charcoal and tobacco, the other for the smoker's mouth; of embroideries executed in large flowery patterns, and for the most part in crimson silk on a cotton ground, by a needle fixed in a wooden handle like a gimlet. Elsewhere are the bazaars for harness, carpets, rope, iron, hardware, skins, dried fruits, and drugs, the

latter containing, in addition to medicines, cosmetics for the ladies' eyebrows and lashes, and rouge for their cheeks and nails. Whole streets are devoted to the sale of cotton goods, gaudy Bokharan velvets and rainbow-coloured native silks and tissues. Here leather riding-trousers, or *chumbar*, are procurable, stained red with madder, and showily embroidered with silk down the front. There are displayed green leather boots all in one piece, or long riding-boots with turned-up toes and ridiculously sharp-pointed heels.

Brass and copper ware

Russian *samovars*, or tea-urns, are sold in great numbers, and one simmers in almost every shop, tea being as constant a beverage here as it is in Japan, or as coffee is in Constantinople. I thought the jewellery insignificant and poor. But, on the other hand, the brass and copper work, which is confined to a separate bazaar, resounding the whole day with a mighty din of hammers, is original and beautiful. Elegant *kungans*, or brass ewers, may be purchased; and every variety of bowl, beaten into quaint designs and shapes, or with a pattern chiselled into the metal through a surface coating of tin. I was more than once offered silver coins of the Græco-Bactrian dynasty, bearing the inscription ***ΒΑΣΙΛΕΤΣ ΕΤΘΤ-ΔΗΜΟΣ***.

Barter and currency

Bargaining was only to be pursued with great patience and much cajolery, the vendor being as a rule by no means anxious to part with his article except for a considerable profit. Crowds will collect round a European as he is endeavouring to make a

purchase, following each stage of the transaction with the keenest interest, and applauding the rival strategy. The object under discussion will be passed from hand to hand, and each will give his own opinion. Usually a volunteer middleman detaches himself from the crowd, and with a great show of disinterestedness affects to conciliate the owner and to complete the bargain. A good deal of gesticulation must of necessity be employed, for with a total ignorance of Tartar on the one side, and of English, German, or French on the other, and only an infinitesimal command of Russian on both, progress is difficult. The shopkeeper is very amenable to personal attention. He likes to be patted on the back and whispered to in the ear; and if, after a prolonged struggle, repeated perhaps for two or three days, you can at length get hold of his hand and give it a hearty shake, the bargain is clinched and the purchase is yours. The people struck me as very stupid in their computations, requiring calculating-frames with rows of beads in order to make the simplest reckoning, and being very slow in exchange. But I thought them a far less extortionate and rascally lot than their fellows in the marts of Cairo or Stamboul. Jenkinson's description of the Bokharan currency still holds good :—

> Their money is silver and copper; for golde, there is none currant; they have but one piece of silver, and that is worth 12 pence English; and the copper money are called pooles, and 120 of them goeth to the value of the said 12d., and is more common paiment than the silver.

At the time of my visit the silver *tenga* was worth about fivepence, and contained sixty-five of the little copper *puls*.

Russian monopoly of import trade from Europe

It is quite evident that the Russians possess a complete monopoly of the import trade from Europe. Earlier travellers report having seen many Birmingham and Manchester goods. I only noticed one shop where English wares were being sold, and they had come through a Bombay firm.[1] Russian prints, calicoes, and cottons are successfully competing with the far more beautiful native materials, and hideous brocades from Moscow debauch the instinctive good taste of the East. Russian iron, hardware, and porcelain have driven out the native manufacture of these articles. European ink, pens, writing-paper, and note-books are exposed for sale. Kerosene lamps are beginning to take the place of the mutton-grease candles, till a year ago the only means of lighting, and the sewing-machine buzzes in the cotton-seller's shop. Since my return I have heard that the entire town is about to be lighted with petroleum.

[1] My observations are confirmed by the report of M. Tcharikoff for the year 1887 (quoted in No. 447 of the Annual Series of Trade Reports of the Foreign Office, 1889), which contained these words: 'English goods are not able to compete with Russian products, and English prints are rarely to be met with at present in Bokhara.' Also by the journal of the Russian Ministry of Finance (1889), which said: 'Since the construction of the Samarkand section of the Transcaspian railway the import trade from Russia into Bokhara has made enormous progress. On the one hand, this trade has visibly driven out goods of English origin from the Bokharan market, whither manufactured goods from India are never sent, with the exception perhaps of English muslin; and, on the other hand, it is clear that the exportation of Russian goods from Bokhara into Afghanistan has increased also.'

Russian firms the city

In another direction a great change may be traced to the last two or three years. For a long time the considerable trade with Russia was not in Russian hands. Native merchants, travelling by Orenburg to Nijni Novgorod, taking with them silk and cotton stuffs, camels' hair, goats' hair, wool, and furs, and bringing back Russian commodities, reaped the double profit. In 1873, Dr. Schuyler reported that there was only one Russian merchant in Bokhara. As late as 1885 the agents of the Russian Commercial Company were the only representatives, and were reported to be living, almost as prisoners, in a caravanserai. Now that the railway has been opened, and communication is easy, the Russians are awakening to the possibilities of this vast untilled field of operation. Native monopoly is challenged in every quarter. There are branches in Bokhara of the Imperial Russian Bank, of the Central Asian Commercial Company, and of the Russian Transport Society; and of private firms, such as those of Messrs. Nadjeschda, Djukoff, Burnascheff, Durschmitt, Stein, Neumann, &c., all of whom are doing a lucrative business, and some of whom have started branches in other towns of the Khanate.

Statistics of trade

The latest statistics of Russo-Bokharan trade, as supplied by the 'Times' correspondent (October 2, 1888), were as follows:—

	Roubles
Russian imports into the Khanate of Bokhara .	16,675,000
Bokharan exports into Russia	15,040,000
Surplus in favour of Russia	1,635,000

From another well-informed source, however, I have

received a different distribution of the same sum-total, of 31,715,000 roubles, viz. as follows:—

	Exports from Bokhara	*Imports into Bokhara*
	Roubles	Roubles
Bokharan trade with Russia .	12,500,000	10,600,000
„ „ Persia . .	2,120,000	5,475,000
„ „ Afghanistan and India	420,000	600,000
Total . . .	15,040,000	16,675,000

Here, as elsewhere, I have found it extremely difficult to obtain accurate figures; but in this case I know that the second computation is official and correct.

Effects of the railway

In illustration of the extraordinary change which in its brief existence the railway has already brought about, let me quote Dr. Heyfelder's own words in a publication to which I have already referred: [1]—

In the summer of 1888 landowners from Poltawa came to the Amir's dominion and bought up live sheep in Kara Kul, which they took home by the railway. From Moscow came buyers of lambskins; from Asia Minor, French dealers for the export of walnut-trees; from the Caucasus, Armenians and Jews, who bought huge quantities of carpets, so that the price was almost doubled. Not a single foreigner who attended the opening ceremonies, not one of the travellers from France, England, Italy, and Russia, who have journeyed over the half-finished line, went away without purchasing some silks, embroideries, metal-work, arms, or knives. But they also brought with them European innovations; and already, in the winter of 1888, the bazaars were stocked with articles never before seen: porcelain, lamps, glasses, mirrors, brushes, writing materials, coffee, preserves, biscuits. At the railway stations appeared cards, cigars, beer, wine, brandy (the sale of which on their own soil the Bokhariots have

[1] *Unsere Zeit*, October 1888. Leipzig.

prohibited by agreement). European furniture, partly imported, partly imitated in uncouth fashion, came in the wake of European needs; European buildings in a modest way are springing up along the railroad; and near his country seat at Kari, the Amir has, of his own accord, had built two Russian edifices, the one in modern, the other in old Russo-Byzantine style. They are in stone, and are architecturally tasteful and pretty. Moreover, some engineers have constructed the station-buildings in beautifully hewn freestone and marble from the neighbouring rocks, as an example to the Sarmatians for the use of their rich mountain stones and marbles.

Restrictions on the sale of liquor

In the above paragraph will be noticed the statement that the Amir has interdicted the sale of intoxicating liquor on his own territory, except, it may be added, for the use of the Russian Agency, and for the members of the European colony in the capital. History repeats itself; for, 330 years ago, Master Anthony Jenkinson, before mentioned, recorded the fact that

> it is forbidden at Boghar to drinke any other thing than water and mare's milke; and whosoever is found to breake that law is whipped and beaten most cruelly through the open markets; and there are officers appointed for the same who have authoritie to goe into any man's house to search if he have either *aqua vitæ* wine or brage, and finding the same doe breake the vessels, spoil the drinke, and punish the masters of the house most cruelly; yea, and many times if they perceive but by the breath of a man that he hath drunke, without further examination he shall not escape their hands.

Mussulman inebriety

What orthodoxy dictated in the sixteenth century, policy, in the decay of religious fervour, recommends now; but it is greatly to be feared that the second

will not prove as lasting or as powerful a deterrent as was the first. At all the railway stations along the line is to be found a plentiful display of liquor and spirits, in the fantastic glass bottles, shaped like animals, that the Russian taste affects. The Russian soldier in Central Asia has an excuse for insobriety in the loneliness of his life and the want of more elevating pastime. But his example is unhappily contagious. The Mussulmans of the Caucasus have long ago waived their scruples; the Persians of Khorasan have been similarly seduced by Russian importation, and it is to be expected that artificial restrictions will not save the more orthodox Sunnites of Bokhara from a like surrender. Already the Khans of Merv, habituated to European entertainment, sip their glass of *vodka*, and toss off their bumper of champagne. Where costliness does not intervene, the licence of an upper class is soon apt to become the law of a lower. Western civilisation in its Eastward march suggests no sadder reflection than that it cannot convey its virtues alone, but must come with Harpies in its train, and smirch with their foul contact the immemorial simplicity of Oriental life.

Survival of ancient customs

Nevertheless in many respects the latter still remains intact. Customs and methods prevail which date from an unknown antiquity, and alternately transport the observer to the Bagdad of Haroun al Raschid and to the Hebrews of the Mosaic dispensation. In a low dark hovel I saw corn being ground by a miserable horse who, with blinded eyes and his nose tied to

a beam overhead, was walking round and round a narrow circle, and causing to revolve an upper and a nether millstone below the surface of the ground. I saw cotton being carded by the primitive agency of a double bow, the smaller one being fixed to the ceiling and the larger one attached to its string by a cord, and struck by a mallet so as to cause a smart rebound. One morning in the bazaar we observed a crowd collected in the street round a mounted horseman, and presently howls of pain issued from the centre of the throng. It turned out to be the Reis-i-shariat, a religious functionary or censor of morals—an office which was revived a century ago by Amir Maasum—whose duty it is to ride about the town, compelling people to attend the schools or mosques, and inspecting weights and measures. He was engaged upon the latter operation, and was comparing the stone weights in a shop, which are often substituted for metal because of their cheapness, with the standard weight. The luckless shopkeeper, convicted of fraud, was forthwith stripped bare in the street, forced to kneel down, and soundly castigated on the back with a leather thong whip, carried by the Reis' attendants. The features of the crowd expressed a faint curiosity, but not a trace of another emotion.

Dr. Heyfelder

It would be hard to exaggerate the part which the manners and generosity of Dr. Heyfelder, who has now lived for nearly two years in Bokhara, have played in the pacification of this whilom haunt of fanaticism. As early as six in the morning people

crowd into the Embassy to see him. Very often so childish is their faith that they do not ask for a prescription, but simply implore his touch. At first the women declined to unveil, would not allow him to feel their pulse, and only communicated with him through the medium of a male relative. Familiarity, however, is fast obliterating this suspicion. When the lately murdered Divan Begi was lying on his death-bed, and his life blood was ebbing away, he kept asking every few minutes for his doctor. The latter was unfortunately at a distance, and, owing to a block on the railway, could not come. A fat old Beg, he told me, came to him one day and said, 'Can you make me better? I suffer from eating four dinners a day.' 'Certainly,' said the doctor; 'eat three.' Thereupon the old gentleman became very angry, and retorted, 'How can I eat less when I am called upon to entertain venerable guests?' When the young Amir came back from the coronation of the Czar in Russia, Dr. Heyfelder asked him what he had liked best in that country. 'The lemonade and ice at Moscow,' was the ingenuous reply; an answer which reminds one of O'Donovan's tale of the man who had been a servant of the Persian Embassy in London for nine years, and who, having returned to his native land, said that his dearest recollections of the British metropolis were its corned beef and bitter ale.

The *reshta* or guinea-worm of Bokhara

The object in which the doctor is specially interested is the extirpation of the well-known Bokharan disease, the *reshta*, or *filaria medinensis*, a parasite which cannot even now be better described than in

the words of Anthony Jenkinson three hundred years ago :—

> There is a little river running through the middes of the saide Citie, but the water thereof is most unholsome, for it breedeth sometimes in men that drinke thereof, and especially in them that be not there borne, a worme of an ell long, which lieth commonly in the legge betwixt the flesh and the skinne, and is pluckt out about the ancle with great art and cunning; the Surgeons being much practised therein, and if shee breake in plucking out, the partie dieth, and every day she commeth out about an inche, which is rolled up, and so worketh till shee be all out.

So common is this malady in Bokhara, that every fifth person suffers from it; and the same individual may be harbouring at the same time from two to ten, nay, from twenty to thirty, of these worms. Khanikoff even relates that he heard of a Khivan who had one hundred and twenty simultaneously in his body.[1] Their extraction is not difficult or dangerous, unless, as Jenkinson said, part of the worm is broken off and left in the flesh, when suppuration and consequent risk may ensue. When extracted it is sometimes from two to three feet long, and has the appearance of a long string of vermicelli. A curious feature is, that the most minute examination of the drinking-water of Bokhara under the microscope has never revealed the *reshta* germ. Nor, again, has Dr. Heyfelder ever discovered or identified a male specimen. He is inclined to think that the female, being oviparous, pushes her way to the surface of the skin when full

[1] *Bokhara, its Amir and its People.* By Khanikoff. Translated into English, 1845, p. 63.

of young—each *reshta*, upon dissection, being found to contain from half a million to a million embryo worms. Either the male dies after fertilisation, or the parasite is bisexual. The embryos, if occasionally dosed with a drop of water, will continue to live for six days. The doctor has made frequent efforts to obtain statistics from the natives both at Bokhara and Samarkand, as to the character, area, and probable causes of the affliction, but has failed to obtain any replies. It is by no means certain even that it is necessarily to be traced to the waters of the Zerafshan. Higher up the river it is more rare. At Kermineh it is quite an exception, at Samarkand it is only found when imported, and at Jizak, once a centre of the disease, it has been immensely reduced since the Russian occupation and superintendence of the water supply. The filthy condition of some of the open pools at Bokhara is quite sufficient to account for its wide propagation in that place. One of the commonest causes of reproduction is the shocking carelessness of the barbers, who are the professional extractors of the worm, and who throw down the living parasite, which very likely crawls away and multiplies its species a hundred-thousand-fold in some pool or puddle. Dr. Heyfelder would have a law passed that every *reshta* shall be burned upon extraction. The disease could, however, only be eradicated by a very stringent supervision of the water supply, and by the compulsory use of filters; the latter being the means by which the Russians, while constructing the railway, entirely escaped contagion.

Bokharan army

Among the prerogatives which are left to the Amir are the possession of a native army, and the insignia and retinue of an Asiatic Court. The former is said to consist of about 12,000 men (in Vambéry's time it was 40,000), but resembles an irregular gendarmerie rather than a standing army. I expect that its value, which might be guessed by analogy

MILITARY PARADE AT BOKHARA.

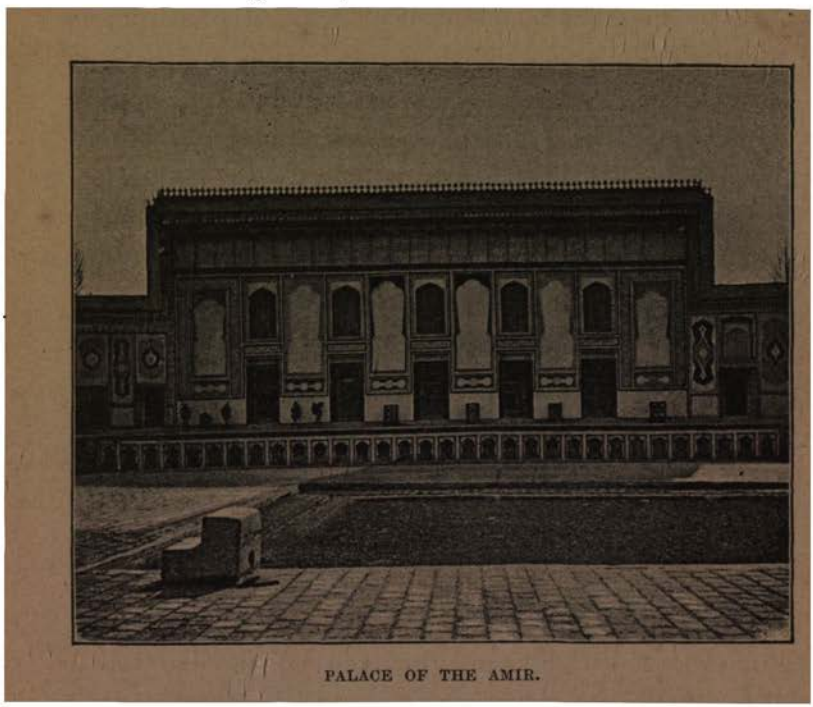
with the least warlike forces of the native princes in India, was very accurately gauged by General Komaroff, who smiled when I asked him if he thought the Bokharan soldiers were any good, and said, 'They are possibly better than the Persians.' It is quite laughable to hear, as we have recently done, of their being moved down to the Oxus to resist the Afghans. Their uniform consists of a black sheepskin shako, a

loose red tunic with leather belt and cartridge-pouch, abundant pantaloons, and big leather boots. It is closely modelled on the Russian lines, and includes even Russian shoulder-straps. Each soldier is armed with some kind of musket and a sword; and the words of command, which were framed by a Cossack deserter named Popoff, who organised the army for the late Amir, are delivered in a mixture of Russian, Tartar, and English. The men are said to be volunteers, and while serving to receive pay equal to from 10*l.* to 20*l.* a year. There are also reported to be two squadrons of cavalry and ten pieces of artillery. The ideal of military efficiency in Bokhara seems to be limited to precision in drill, in which I was assured by some European officers that they are very successful. Every movement is smartly executed to the sound of a bugle, and the voice of the officers, whose uniform is fantastic and appearance contemptible, is never heard. There are some 150 signals, which it is not surprising to hear that it takes a man several years to learn. Where the British soldier is ordered to pile arms and to stand at ease, the Bokharan sits down on the ground. Some years ago the drill contained a movement of a most interesting character which has since been abandoned. At a given signal the soldiers lay down upon their backs, and kicked their heels in the air. This was copied from the action of Russian troops in one of the earlier engagements, where, after crossing a river, they were ordered to lie down and shake the water out of their big top-boots. The retreating Bokhariots saw the

manœuvre, and attributed to it a magical share in the Russian victory.

Native Court and ceremonial

The Bokharan Court is still surrounded by all the pomp and much of the mystery of an Asiatic *régime*. The Amir is treated as a sort of demigod, whom inferior beings may admire from a distance. No



PALACE OF THE AMIR.

glimpse is ever caught of the royal harem. *Batchas*, or dancing-boys, are among the inseparable accessories of the palace, and represent a Bokharan taste as effeminate as it is depraved. An audience with the Amir is attended with much formality, and is followed on his part by an offering of gifts. No European can be presented except in uniform or in evening dress.

One of my companions, who was a relative of the Governor-General, having been granted an audience, found that he had not the requisite garments in which to go. Accordingly I had to rig him out in my evening clothes with a white tie and a Bond Street shirt. Etiquette further requires the presentee to ride to the palace on horseback; and a more comic spectacle than an English gentleman in a dress-suit riding in broad daylight in the middle of a gaudily dressed cavalcade through an Oriental town cannot be conceived. At such moments even the English breast yearns for a decoration. When the audience is over a *dastarkhan* is served, one or more horses with embroidered saddlecloths and turquoise-studded bridles are brought in, and he 'whom the king delighteth to honour' is sent home with a wardrobe full of brilliant *khalats*.

Tendency to incorporation

The narrative of my experiences at Bokhara will no doubt leave the same impression upon the minds of my readers as did their occurrence upon my own, viz. one of astonishment at the extraordinary change which must have been effected in the attitude and demeanour of the people during the last few years. If the accounts that were received up to that date about the hostility of the inhabitants be true, it amounts to little less than a political revolution. Whether this be due to a merely interested recognition of the overwhelming strength of Russia, or to the skilful diplomacy of the latter, or, as General Komaroff hinted to me, to the salutary and all-powerful influence of the rouble, it must equally be set down

to the credit of the conquering power. The allegiance of the Amir may be considered as absolutely assured; not only because a treacherous move would at once cost him his throne, but because Russia, having possession of the upper courses of the Zeraf-shan, could cut off the water supply of Bokhara in a week, and starve the city into submission.

What diplomacy began the railway is fast completing. So mercantile, and, it may be added, so mercenary a people as the Bokhariots, fall ready victims to the friendly stress of commercial fusion. Native finance is itself an indirect ally of Russia; for gradually, as trade is developed, the $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. *ad valorem* duty, both upon exports and imports, which is still levied under the terms of the Treaty of 1873, as well as the heavy local taxation, amounting to nearly 1*s.* 6*d.* in the pound, exclusive of the tithe to the Mosque, which is exacted from the subjects of the Amir, as compared with those of the Czar, will operate as inducements towards a closer union.

Looking forward into the future, I anticipate that Bokhara may still for many years remain a *quasi* independent State, but that the capital will gradually succumb to Russian influence and civilisation, and that so in time a party may arise among the natives themselves agitating for incorporation.

Transitional epoch at Bokhara

For my own part, on leaving the city I could not help rejoicing at having seen it in what may be described as the twilight epoch of its glory. Were I to go again in later years it might be to find electric light in the highways. The King of Korea has it at Seoul,

a surely inferior capital; the Amir of Afghanistan has it at Kabul; then why not he of Bokhara? It might be to see window-panes in the houses, and to meet with trousered figures in the streets. It might be to eat *zakuska* in a Russian restaurant and to sleep in a Russian hotel; to be ushered by a *tchinovnik* into the palace of the Ark, and to climb for fifty *kopecks* the Minari Kalian. Who can tell whether Russian beer will not have supplanted tea, and *vodka* have supplemented opium? Civilisation may ride in the Devil's Wagon, but the devil has a habit of exacting his toll. What could be said for a Bokhara without a Kush Begi, a Divan Begi, and an Inak—without its *mullahs* and *kalendars*, its *toksabas* and its *mirzabashi*, its *shabraques* and *tchapans* and *khalats*? Already the mist of ages is beginning to rise and to dissolve. The lineaments are losing their beautiful vague mystery of outline. It is something, in the short interval between the old order and the new, to have seen Bokhara, while it may still be called the Noble, and before it has ceased to be the most interesting city in the world.

CHAPTER VII

SAMARKAND AND TASHKENT

Towns also and cities, especially the ancient, I failed not to look upon with interest. How beautiful to see thereby, as through a long vista, into the remote Time; to have, as it were, an actual section of almost the earliest Past brought safe into the Present, and set before your eyes!

CARLYLE, *Sartor Resartus.*

The Zerafshan valley—Bokharan irrigation—Danger to the city—Possible reforms—Population and fertility of the Samarkand district — History of Samarkand — Description of monuments renounced — The Russian town — Modern public buildings — Change wrought by the railway—Absurd rumour of restoration to Bokhara—The Citadel—Zindan, or prison—The ancient city —Tomb of Tamerlane—The Righistan—Leaning minarets—Material of structure—Samples of the best Arabian style—Ruins of Bibi Khanym—Shah-Zindeh—Need of a Society for the Preservation of Ancient Monuments—Sunset at Samarkand—Russian garrison—Population—Refuge of political exiles—Journey to Tashkent—The Tarantass—Stages of the route—Ruins of Afrasiab—Bridge of Shadman-Melik—Gates of Tamerlane—The Waste of Hunger—The Syr Daria and approach to Tashkent—Great fertility —The two cities and societies—Political banishment—General Rosenbach and the Peace Policy—Native Education—Government House—Public buildings—Ancient or native city—General Prjevalski and Lhasa—Statistics of population—Resources, manufactures and commerce—System of government—Revenue and expenditure—Territorial expansion of Russia.

The Zerafshan valley

BOKHARA is about 150 miles by rail from Samarkand, and the only two important points *en route* are the Bokharan fortress of Kermineh, which the railway skirts at a distance of five miles, and the Russian

frontier post of Katta Kurgan, where we enter the Zerafshan province, annexed by Russia in 1868, after the war with Bokhara that resulted in the capture of Samarkand. A very wise step this was; for the basin of the Zerafshan river, or Gold Strewer, the Polytimetus, or Very Precious, of the Greeks, which extends for about 250 miles between parallel ranges of mountains, is a veritable garden of Eden, and incomparably the most fertile part of Central Asia.[1] The

[1] I append the latest statistics relating to the Zerafshan river and basin, taken from a paper by V. Dingelstedt, published in the Scottish Geographical Magazine for December 1888, and based upon Russian semi-official reports (*Turkestanskia Vedomosti*, 1887, Nos. 35 and 44; 1888, Nos. 5, 6, 13, 14, 15. Middendorf *Ocherki Ferghany*, St. Petersburg, 1887. 'The total length of the Zerafshan, from its source to the lakes where it loses itself, is estimated at about 426 miles, of which the upper part for 286 miles belongs to Russian Turkestan, and the remaining, or lower part, to Bokhara. The basin which the river drains is estimated at about 14,375 square miles, of which 7,285 square miles are level, and 7,090 square miles are mountainous country, where the river excavates a deep channel, extracting the fertilising material which so much enhances its value. Some distance above Samarkand the river divides into two branches, the Ak Daria and the Kara Daria, which re-unite about thirteen miles below the town, near the frontier of Bokhara. Here is the intake of the principal Bokharan canal, the Karaman, which conducts away the greater part of the water remaining in the river after it has fed all the numerous canals in Russian Turkestan. During the rest of its course the river continually decreases in bulk, in consequence of the numerous canals that issue from it on the right and left banks alternately, and runs for about eighty miles preserving the name Zerafshan; but at Du-aba (Two Waters) the greater part of its water is diverted into the canal called Shah-rud, and the little that remains of the Zerafshan runs under the name of Kara Kul for about sixty-two miles in the direction of the town of Kara Kul. Two miles above the town the river breaks up into two arms, the Kara Kul and the Taghi-Kyr. Some twenty miles before reaching the Amu Daria, the now nearly exhausted but still muddy waters of the Zerafshan flow into the marshy lakes of Denghis, Sunghur, and Karanga, which have no outlet.

'The level of the water in the Zerafshan is variable: it is lowest during winter and highest in July, the volumes in the two cases being

country is laid out less frequently in fields than in orchards, producing grapes, figs, peaches, mulberries, apricots, almonds, plums, pomegranates, apples, and pears, and giving a return seven times more profitable than that from agriculture. Branches of the Zerafshan, or canals dug from the main stream, form a network over the face of the land, upon which the eye traces their course in lines of osier and willow, separating brilliant *parterres* of green. The wealth of this natural El Dorado is entirely water-derived and water-fed, and depends upon a system of canalisation that is described by Arab historians as having prevailed unchanged in the ninth century A.D., the origin of which is fixed by many before the Christian era, and which by some has even been thought to vie in antiquity with the kindred system in Egypt.

Bokharan irrigation

I do not propose here to give a detailed account of the Bokharan irrigation works, because this is a subject that has already fully, and perhaps more properly, been dealt with in other works. Its most curious feature to the eyes of a stranger is the extent to which, in spite of Russian influence and a twenty years' possession, native tradition and methods are still pursued. The Russians made some

as 1 : 20. The minimum discharge in December, January, and February is estimated at 1,000 to 1,300 cubic feet per second; in June, July, and August, after the melting of the snows, the maximum is from 19,000 to 22,000 cubic feet per second. The mean discharge for the summer half-year is 14,810, and for the winter half-year 2,718, or for the whole year 8,764 cubic feet per second. This volume of water is employed in the irrigation (exclusive of the province of Ferghana) of an area of about 287 square miles, of which about 115 are in the province of Samarkand, and 172 in the Khanate of Bokhara.'

effort at first to remodel the entire system on more modern and scientific lines; and a Russian official, assisted by native experts, is still responsible for the province of Samarkand. On the whole, however, it has been found best to leave alone both the existing machinery, which depends in the last resort upon popular election by the cultivators of the soil, and the immemorial methods, which, though devised without scientific appliances or knowledge of hydraulics, have yet been conceived with extreme ingenuity and are passably adapted to fulfil their purpose.[1] In Bokhara this system leads to a good deal of abuse; for the *Mirab*, or 'Lord of the waters,' who is appointed to administer the water supply of a particular district, is neither an engineer nor an expert, but commonly a Court nominee, who owes his selection to favouritism, and, like a Roman Verres, does his best to convert his tenure of office into a policy of insurance

[1] The official reports, however, before quoted, give a most unfavourable verdict, and may compel the Russian Government to take action. They say: 'The construction of canals in the Zerafshan province, though not without some boldness both in design and execution, is generally defective; the canals are tortuous, too numerous, and liable to burst and overflow. The intakes of the canals are simply cuttings in the banks, dammed up occasionally by very unsubstantial weirs of any fragile material near at hand. The cleaning and the general maintenance of the canals is most unsatisfactory, as they are allowed to be obstructed by rubbish of every kind. The whole system of irrigation is a very primitive one; all the constructions to raise, dam, let out, carry, distribute, and gauge the water are of the most simple description, and are built of materials close at hand, such as earth, fascines, stakes, branches, sand, gravel, and sometimes rough stones. The administration of the canals in Samarkand lies, as a rule, in the hands of deputies chosen by the people. There are many abuses which the Russian Government is endeavouring to remove, but the whole question has proved as yet too complicated and delicate to be dealt with satisfactorily.'

against future contingencies.[1] Nevertheless it is said that the people most interested, viz. the cultivators of the soil, are satisfied, and that any attempt to enforce a different, even if a more technical, system would lead to mutiny.

Danger to the city

In the territory of Bokhara the extent of the irrigation works may be estimated from the fact that the Zerafshan river has forty-three principal canals diverted from the parent stream, with a total length of not less than 600 miles, in addition to eighty-three similar main canals in the Samarkand province, as well as 939 branch canals conducted from them. The breadth of the canals varies from six to sixty feet. They are not straight, but sinuous and meandering,

[1] Vide the testimony of the same reports: 'As regards the administration of natural as well as artificial water-courses in Bokhara, it is, notwithstanding the vital importance of water to the land, quite deplorable. Not only are ability and knowledge wanting, but, what is worse, there are many persons interested, rather than otherwise, in retaining abuses and disorder, these being elements highly favourable to the exercise of arbitrary power. At the head of the water administration in Bokhara is placed the *mirab*, a powerful personage chosen by the Amir himself from his immediate followers, against whose decision there is no legal appeal whatever. The *mirab* acts through *pendjabegs*, authorised to give orders in his name, and chosen out of the members of his own family. The people are represented by *arbobs* and their assistants *jumban*, who are deputed by the proprietors of the soil (or rather occupiers, for there is no private property in land in Bokhara) to defend the interests of cultivators. In reality these deputies are simply tools in the hands of the administration; they are constrained to execute the orders of the *mirab* and his assistants, and it is only by means of bribery and astuteness that they can succeed in serving their constituents. In Bokhara, as compared with Samarkand, abuse may be said therefore to reign supreme; and the deficiency in the fall of the land, as well as the dependence on outside authorities, places the work in a condition which cannot but tell in a highly unfavourable manner on the state of agriculture, and on the sanitary condition of the country in general.'

often forming ravines and gullies, and generally occupying far more space than is absolutely necessary to conduct water. Any inequality of distribution is speedily rectified upon the frantic complaints of the suffering or imperilled districts; and the more fortunate or better provided have their supplies temporarily arrested or curtailed for the relief of their destitute brethren. It is said, notwithstanding, that Bokhara, being lower down the stream than Samarkand, is the loser in any partition, however fairly carried out, and that owing to the steadily diminishing supply from the uplands, the oasis is being contracted, and is yearly ceding some of its fringes to the implacable encroachment of the dunes. Certain it is, that cities and oases within twenty miles of the capital have been so overtaken and destroyed, and that the sand-flood is advancing rather than retreating. There are some who see in this movement a sentence of impending doom against Bokhara, and proclaim that the handwriting is already upon the wall. If those who live upon the spot take a less pessimistic view, it may be because they know that its realisation will not occur in their time, or that they have confidence, both in the schemes of forestry and water-storage which the Russians have to some extent taken in hand, and in the last emergency in the resources of science, to save them from so grim a consummation.

Possible reforms

Greater unity as well as competence of administration are reforms, apart from more economical and scientific methods, which it is well within the power

of Russia to introduce. A more equable system of land taxation would follow next upon the programme; and from neither need any result, other than favourable, be anticipated, while regard could be had in both cases to the prejudices and prescriptions of the natives.

Population and fertility of the Samarkand district

The Samarkand district, which we now enter, contains, according to the latest statistics, upon an area of 24,184 square versts, a population of 464,985 inhabitants, of whom 452,844 are natives, 9,397 Russians, 2,653 Jews, 81 Hindus, and 10 non-Russian Europeans. The bulk of the people, not congregated in the big towns, are engaged in agriculture or horticulture. We may infer the marvellous fertility of the soil and the alluvial bounty of the Zerafshan from the fact that three crops are sometimes raised from the same plot in one year: (1) the winter crop of wheat, barley, rye, or clover, sown in November and reaped in the early spring; (2) the spring crop of maize, rice, sorghum, or cotton, sown in the spring and reaped in the early autumn; and (3) the autumn crop of turnips, carrots, or millet, sown in September or October and gathered in November. Clover can be cut five or six times in the year.[1] Through scenery and amid surroundings of which these statistics may have furnished, not a picture but an adumbration, the traveller approaches the most famous and romantic city in Central Asia, Samarkand.

History of Samarkand

Of the history of Samarkand—the Maracanda of the Macedonians, the Samokien of the Buddhist pil-

[1] *Unsere Zeit*, October 1888.

grim Hiouen Tsang, the Sumar Margo of Sir John Mandeville, the favourite and also the final resting-place of Timur, the capital, with 150,000 inhabitants, of Sultan Baber, the combined Athens and Delphi of the remote East—I shall here say nothing. Whatever historical allusions have been justified in treating of other and less widely known places, are superfluous in the mention of a spot that has long been dear not only to the informed zeal of the student, but to the cultured intelligence of the world.

Description of monuments renounced

Neither shall I feel justified in giving more than a cursory account of the great monuments that once made Samarkand the glory, and that still, in their ruin, leave it the wonder, of the Asiatic continent. They have in the main been so well and conscientiously described in Schuyler's and other writings, and, beyond the march of further decay, have altered so little since their date, that were I to linger over details I might be convicted of recapitulating badly what had been excellently said before. The illustrations which are appended will give my readers some idea of their present condition; while such remarks as I shall venture to make upon them will be the independent suggestions of the writer's observation. The very purport of this book, already, I fear, somewhat strained in the chapter upon the city of Bokhara, compels me to turn aside, with whatever reluctance, from the splendours of the ancient to the more modest but still appreciable attractions of the modern town.

The present terminus of the railway at Samarkand

The Russian town

is a scene of great activity; for the station buildings and offices were, when I visited them, still in the hands of the masons and had not yet reached the first story. A broad but dusty road, the first metalled road I had seen east of the Caspian, planted on both sides with avenues of poplars, runs for a distance of nearly three miles to the Russian town. This is a delightful quarter, completely buried in trees, from which peep out the white fronts of low one-storied houses, and is intersected at right angles by boulevards of enormous width overshadowed by lines of poplars and acacias, and bordered by rivulets of running water. The principal street is planted with as many as twelve parallel rows of trees, on either side of the carriage drive, the footpaths, and the brawling streams. From an elevation no buildings are visible, and the Russian town might be mistaken for a thickly wooded park. From the earliest times this side of Samarkand has been celebrated for its wealth of trees and verdure, and for its sylvan retreats, the favourite residence in bygone days of Tartar nobles, just as they now are of Russian generals and colonels. In the tenth century Ibn Haukal left on record that

> There are here many villas and orchards, and very few of the palaces are without gardens, so that if a person should go to the Kohendiz, and from that look around, he would find that the villas and palaces were covered, as it were, with trees; and even the streets and shops and banks of the streams are all planted with trees.

And in 1404, Don Ruy de Clavijo, visiting Samarkand when at the height of its glory under Timur,

wrote this interesting though perhaps insufficiently concise description :—

> The city is surrounded on all sides by many gardens and vineyards, which extend in some directions a league and a half, in others two leagues, the city being in the middle. Among these gardens there are great and noble houses, and here the lord (*i.e.* Timur) has several palaces. The nobles of the city have their houses amongst these gardens, and they are so extensive, that when a man approaches the city he sees nothing but a mass of very high trees. Many streams of water flow through the city and through these gardens, and among these gardens there are many cotton-plantations and melon-grounds, and the melons of this ground are good and plentiful; and at Christmas-time there is a wonderful quantity of melons and grapes.

Modern public buildings

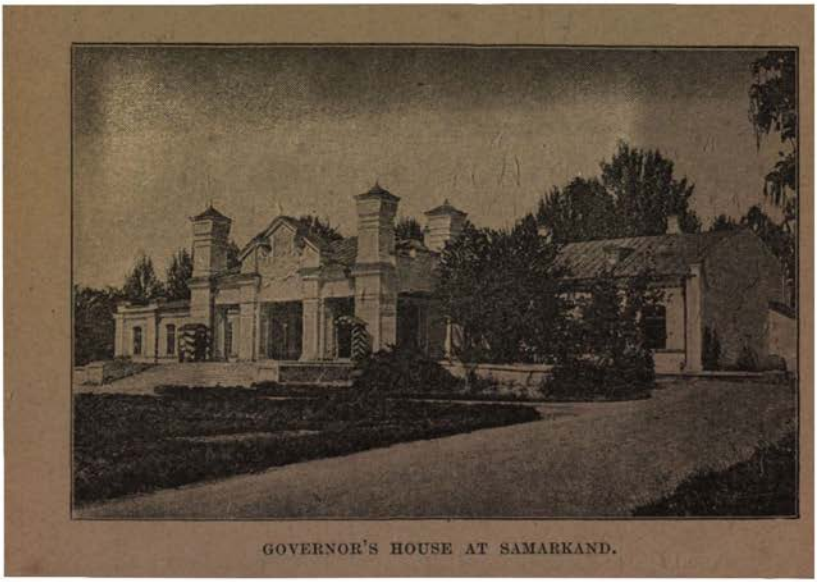
Embowered here and there amid these agreeable surroundings are to be seen modern buildings of some pretentiousness and importance. Of these the largest are the Governor's house, standing in a fine park; the military club, similarly situated, and the Russian church with blue star-bespangled domes. There are also some public gardens containing a lake. A certain primness and monotony of appearance may perhaps be charged against the Russian Samarkand. But compared with other places I had seen it was almost a paradise; and if life there be regarded as exile, at least it can be no insupportable burden. The climate is delicious,[1] the elevation above the sea

[1] The mean annual temperature of Samarkand is 16° (Réaumur); that of the hottest month is 30°, and of the coldest month 0°. The average rainfall is sixty days in the year, or double as many as at Cairo.

is considerable—over 2,000 feet—and there is a civilised society.

Change wrought by the railway

Here, however, as elsewhere, the railway is effecting a most extraordinary change. Tolerable though existence may have been at Samarkand under the old conditions, it was yet very remote, more remote even than Tashkent, through which place it was commonly approached from the north. The



GOVERNOR'S HOUSE AT SAMARKAND.

post took nearly a month in arriving from St. Petersburg. A telegram to Bokhara, only 150 miles distant, was obliged to describe a circuit of many thousands of miles by Tashkent, Orenburg, Samara, Moscow, and Baku, and very likely did not reach its destination for days. A far-off echo of the great world dimly permeated months afterwards to the banks of the Zerafshan, like the faint murmur in the

hollow of a sea-shell. General Annenkoff's railway has changed all this. It has completed the work which a twenty years' occupation had previously set in train. Already the old times, when a Bokharan Amir took his seat upon the *Koktash*, and when a desperate attempt was made to entrap and massacre the Russian garrison in the citadel, have lapsed from memory; and the present generation of Uzbeg and Tajik can remember no other dominion but that of the Ouroussi, which has thereby acquired the stamp of eternal fitness, and become stereotyped in the fatalist's creed. Samarkand may be looked upon as absolutely Russian, if not in part European; more Russian certainly than Benares is English, and far more European than is Peshawur.

Absurd rumour of restoration to Bokhara

A rumour is from time to time circulated in the European newspapers that the Amir of Bokhara is about to apply to Russia for the reddition of Samarkand; and it has even been stated that this was the object of a complimentary embassy recently (March 1889) sent by Seid Abdul Ahad to the Czar. It is true that years ago, before the Russian position in Central Asia was as stable as it has since become, and when the apprehensions of Europe required to be calmed, declarations were made by Russia of her intention to restore the city to its native rulers; and as late as 1870 Prince Gortchakoff assured Sir Andrew Buchanan, the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg, that 'it was the desire of the Emperor to restore Samarkand to Bokhara; but that there was some difficulty in ascertaining how this could be

done without a loss of dignity and without obtaining guarantees for the welfare of the population which had accepted the sovereignty of Russia.' It is unnecessary to say that there never was the slightest intention of carrying out such an engagement, which if a Russian diplomat alone could have given, an English diplomat also would alone have believed. Still less is there any likelihood of such an absurdity now. Its revival is one of the colossal mare's nests discovered by the Russian Press.

The citadel

At the end of the street in which stands the humble lodgment that presumed at the period of my visit to call itself a *Gastinitsa*, or hotel, loom up against the sky the gigantic walls and leaning towers of the three big *medresses* facing upon the Righistan, or public square, of the city of Tamerlane. The two cities, ancient and modern, are, however, separated by a bare stony hill, once occupied by the fortress and palace of the sovereign. Its walls have now been almost entirely demolished; and in their place are to be seen the trim outline and modern fortifications of the Russian citadel. Within this building, which is entered by a drawbridge across a moat, is still preserved part of the Amir's former palace; and here at the end of a court surrounded by an open colonnade[1] is to be seen, behind an iron railing, the *Koktash*, or coronation-stone, of the Timurid sovereigns, the Central Asian equivalent to the Westminster slab from Scone. This celebrated object has

[1] There is an excellent illustration of this court on p. 199 of Mme. de Ujfalvy-Bourdon's *De Paris à Samarkand* (1880); as also an accurate map of Samarkand on p. 177.

been elaborately described by Schuyler and Lansdell. It is a mistake, however, to suppose that it always or has long reposed here. Timur's palace was some distance away to the west; and the *Koktash* was shifted to the citadel by one of the later Bokharan Amirs in this century.

Zindan, or prison

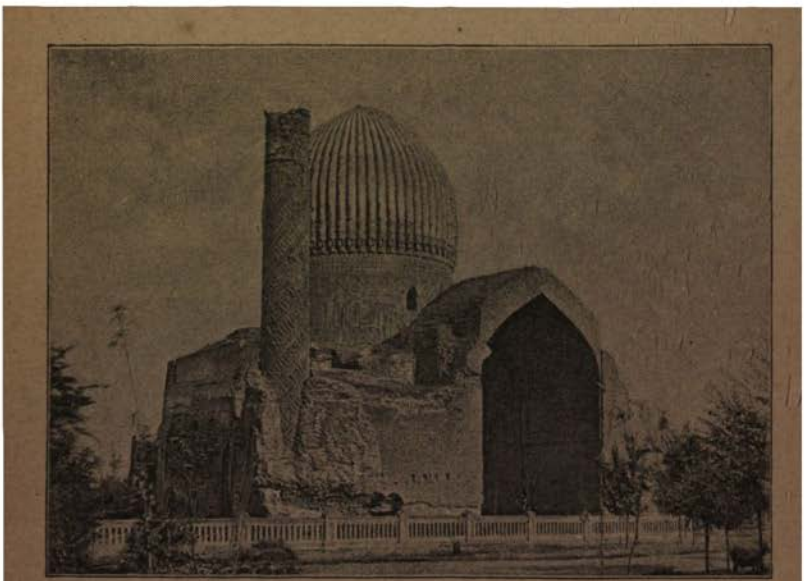
In another part of the citadel was the Zindan, or prison, where, at the time of the Russian occupation, a subterranean dungeon existed like those to which allusion has been made at Bokhara and Karshi. Prisoners were let down into it by ropes; and the grooves which these had worn were visible in the stone lining of the top. How universal a method of punishment this has always been throughout the East may be illustrated both by the parallel of Jerusalem in the seventh century B.C., when Jeremiah 'was let down with cords into the dungeon of Malchiah that was in the court of the prison; and in the dungeon there was no water, but mire; so Jeremiah sunk in the mire;'[1] and by that of Cairo under the Mamluks, where a similar pit, filled with vermin, and emitting noisome odours, was filled up in 1329 A.D.

The ancient city

Beyond the citadel, and on the other side of a slight valley, the native or ancient Samarkand covers the slope of a broad elevation, and from a dusty wilderness of flat roofs lifts up the glories of its mighty college gateways, its glazed and glittering arches, its leaning minarets, and its ribbed and enamelled domes. On the right hand, above a garden of fruit-trees, emerges the cupola that overhangs the last

[1] Jer. xxxviii. 6.

resting-place of the great conqueror himself. In the centre of the landscape are the three huge *medresses* or universities that frame the noblest public square in the world. On the left are the portentous ruins of the *medresse* and mosque of Bibi Khanym, the Chinese wife of Timur, and at a little greater distance is the exquisite cluster of mosques and mausoleums, raised

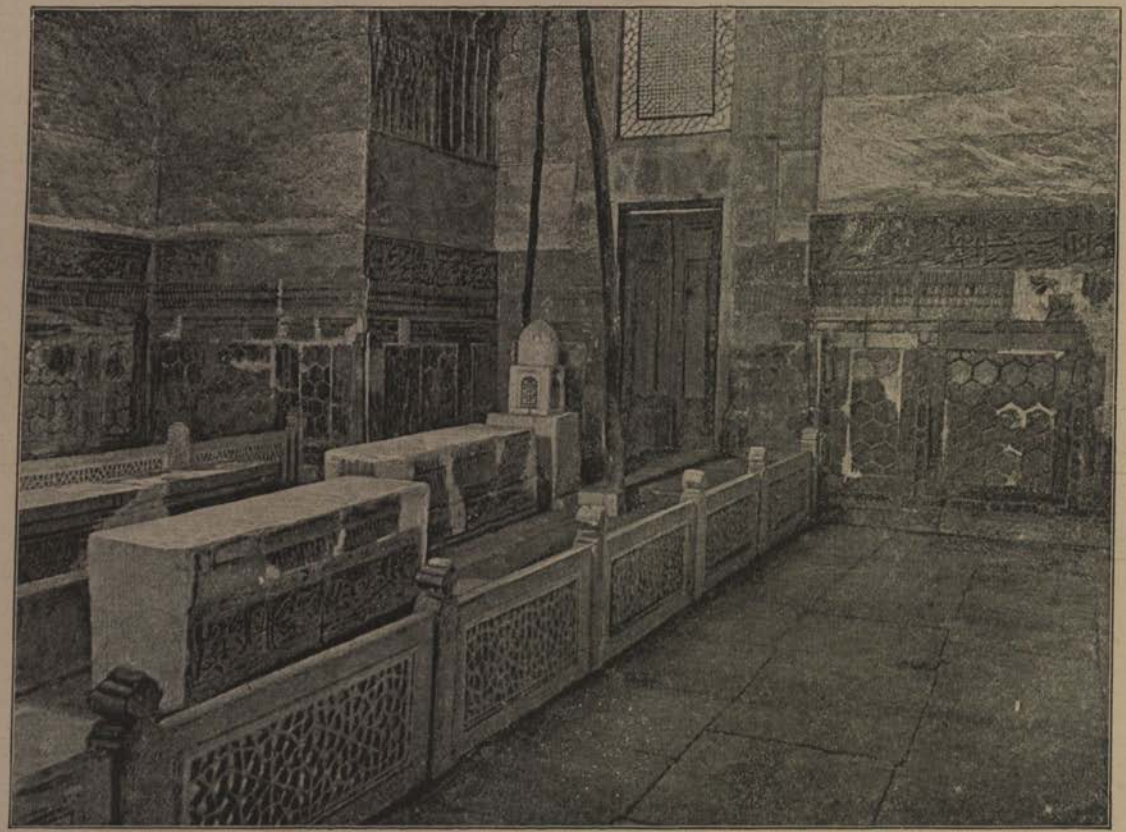


GUR AMIR, OR TOMB OF TAMERLANE.

in honour of a saint whose immortality is expressed by the title of Shah Zindeh, or the Living King. A few words may be permitted about each of these.

Tomb of Tamerlane

The Gur Amir, or Tomb of Tamerlane, is both from the historic and the romantic point of view the most interesting ruin of Samarkand. Here in 1405 the body of the conqueror, embalmed with musk and rose-water, and wrapped in linen, was laid in an



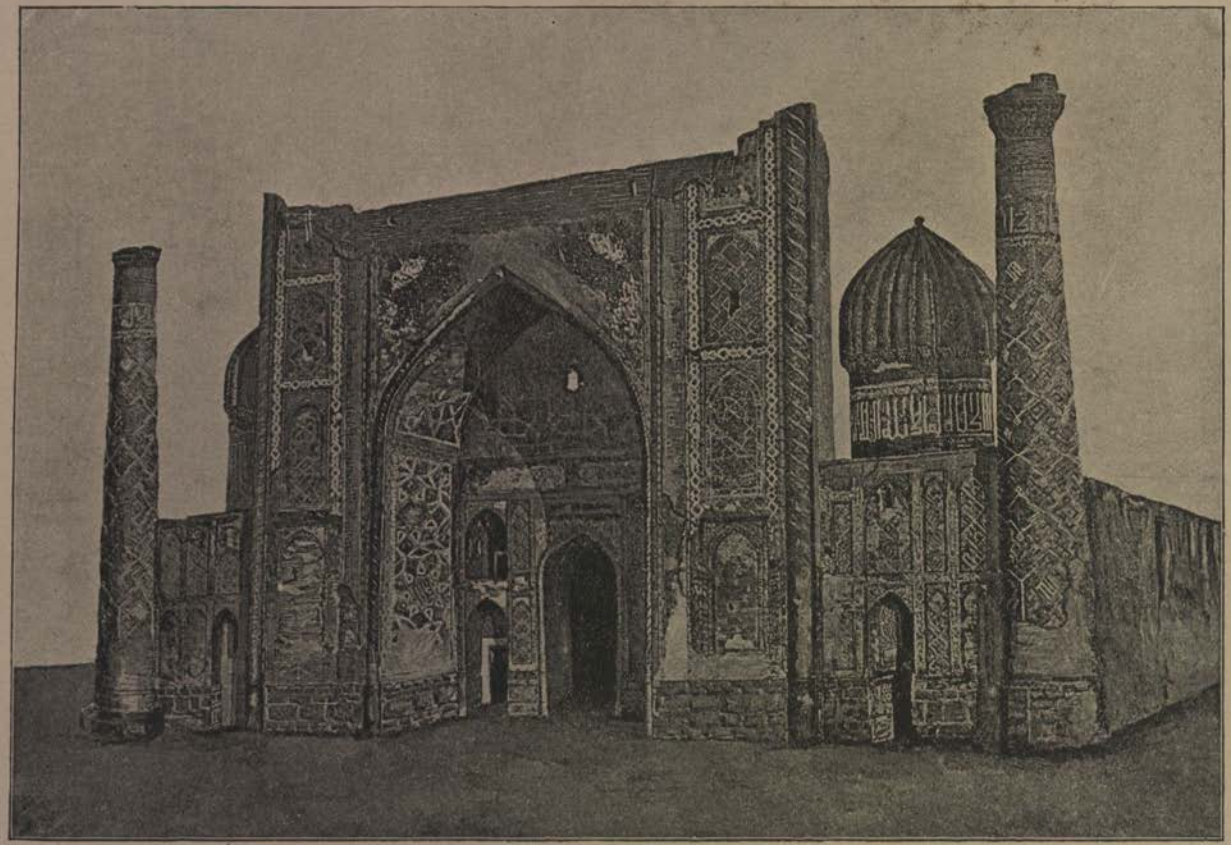
INTERIOR OF THE TOMB OF TAMERLANE

ebony coffin, and deposited beneath the engraved tombstone that we still behold in the vault. The interest of travellers seems usually to have been concentrated upon the upper chamber of the mausoleum, where, after the Eastern fashion, a series of cenotaphs, corresponding to the actual sepulchres below, are disposed upon the floor. The most noteworthy of these, covered with a block of greenish-black stone, said to be nephrite or jade, is that of Timur. The slab has evidently at some time been wrenched from its place and broken in twain; though it is not certain whether the fracture is to be attributed, as the legend runs, to an attempted violation by Nadir Shah. Around the walls of the tomb chamber is a wainscoting of hexagonal slabs of stone, variously described by travellers as agate, jasper, and gypsum. The last designation is nearest the mark; for they are of that species of alabaster, somewhat transparent in texture, but with an under-colour like the sea waves, that is frequently met with in Oriental countries, and is familiar to visitors in Algeria and Egypt. The original tiles and decorations have been stripped or have fallen from the upper part of the walls; and, speaking generally, the entire fabric, which is in a sadly dilapidated and ruined condition, is disappointing to those who approach it with artistic expectations, and cannot be compared with the majestic sepulchres of the later Moguls in India, such as the mausoleum of Akbar the Great at Sikundra. Nevertheless, the place has a certain attraction not perhaps unconnected with its lamentable decay. Though I

do not pretend to understand the impulse that drives pilgrims in shoals to the graves of the departed great, yet there is something inspiring, even if it be a melancholy inspiration, in standing above the dust of one who was both a king among statesmen and a statesman among kings, whose deeds even at this distance of time alike astonish and appal, and whose monumental handiwork, still surviving around, a later and more civilised age has never attempted to equal, and has barely availed to rescue from utter ruin.

The Righistan

We next pass to the Righistan, or centre of the town, and to its triple glory of *medresses*, or religious colleges, those of Ulug Beg, the grandson of Timur (1421), of Shir Dar, or the Lion-bearing (1601)—so called from its bearing in enamelled tiles on its *façade* the Persian lion—and of Tillah Kari, or the Gold-covered (1618)—so named because of the gilding that once adorned its face. I have hazarded the statement that the Righistan of Samarkand was originally, and is still even in its ruin, the noblest public square in the world. I know of nothing in the East approaching it in massive simplicity and grandeur; and nothing in Europe, save perhaps on a humbler scale—the Piazza di San Marco at Venice—which can even aspire to enter the competition. No European spectacle indeed can adequately be compared with it, in our inability to point to an open space in any Western city that is commanded on three of its four sides by Gothic cathedrals of the finest order. For it is clear that the *medresse* of Central Asian Mahometanism is both in its architectural scope and design a lineal



MEDRESSE OF SHIR DAR AT SAMARKAND

counterpart and forerunner of the minster of the West. Instead of the intricate sculpture and tracery crowning the pointed archways of the Gothic front, we see the enamelled tiles of Persia, framing a portal of stupendous magnitude. For the flanking minster towers or spires are substituted two soaring minarets. The central lantern of the West is anticipated by the Saracenic dome, and in lieu of artificial colour thrown through tinted panes, from the open heavens shine down the azure of the Eastern sky and the glory of the Eastern sun. What Samarkand must have been in its prime when these great fabrics emerged from the mason's hands, intact, and glittering with all the effulgence of the rainbow, their chambers crowded with students, their sanctuaries thronged by pilgrims, and their corporations endowed by kings, the imagination can still make some endeavour to depict.

Leaning minarets

Upon the structural features I shall confine myself to three observations. The minarets of all the *medresses* appear to be slightly out of the perpendicular, those of the college of Ulug Beg, which, as has been seen, is 200 years older than its fellows, conspicuously so. In a locality which has frequently been shaken by earthquakes, it surely needs no exceptional gifts either of acuteness or credulity to attribute to natural causes an irregularity so extravagant that no Oriental architect, whatever his taste for the unsymmetrical or bizarre, could ever have perpetrated it. And yet we find competent writers exhausting their inventiveness in far-fetched interpretations. Schuyler says the inclination is an optical illusion. Mme. Ujfalvy

attributes it to the skill of the builders. M. Moser also speaks of it as an architectural *tour de force*. Krestovski suggests a religious meaning. But Dr. Lansdell emerges triumphant from the competition of perverse ingenuity; for, having ascended one of the minarets himself, he proclaims the original discovery that there is no inclination at all![1]

Material of structure

Nowhere is the influence of country, of climate, and of natural resources upon architecture more noticeable than in the buildings of Samarkand. While the mildness and dryness of the atmosphere enabled the architect to dispense with many essentials of our Northern styles, on the other hand the poverty of local resources compelled him to go far afield for his decoration, and to be content with brick as his staple material. Persian artificers seem to have been almost exclusively employed upon the structures of Samarkand; and the wonderful enamelled tiles by which they were embellished had in all probability been burnt and glazed in Persian ovens. What Eastern architects were accomplishing at the same time with richer means at their disposal, may be seen in the mosques and mausoleums of the Mahometan conquerors of Hindostan. Timur, it is true, was antecedent by a century and a

[1] It is, however, in speaking of the *medresse* of Tillah Kari that Dr. Lansdell achieves his greatest masterpiece. He says (*Russian Central Asia*, vol. i. 587), 'The wall of the *Kibleh*, or niche, where is supposed to be the Imaum (or image, called *Mikhrab*, that presents itself to the Moslem mind in prayer), is gilded.' Now, as everyone knows, in a mosque the *Mihrab* is the prayer-niche (corresponding to the Christian apse), the *Kibla* is the orientation of the niche, or direction of Mecca, and the *Imam* is the lay-reader or preacher, invited to read the lessons or to preach from the *mimbar* (pulpit) in the Friday service.

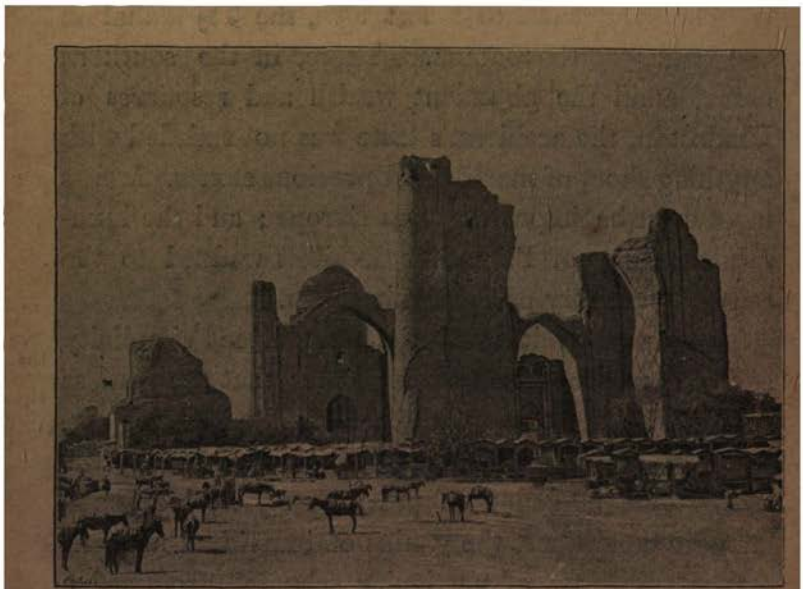
MEDRESSE OF ULUG BEG

half to his descendants Humayun and Akbar, whose glorious erections we see at Agra and Delhi. But the Shir Dar and Tillah Kari *medresses* were almost exactly synchronous with the fabrics of Jehangir and Shah Jehan, with the Agran tomb of Itmad-ud-Dowlah, with the Pearl Mosque, loveliest of private chapels, in the citadel at Delhi, and with that most perfect of tributes ever raised to a lost love, the Taj Mahal on the banks of the Jumna. There, in the southern clime, amid the abundant wealth and resources of Hindostan, the architect's taste was not satisfied with anything short of marble and precious stones. Artists must even be imported from Europe; and the luxuriant elegance of Florentine detail is wedded to the august symmetry of Saracenic forms.

Samples of the best Arabian style

Nevertheless it is in the magnificent simplicity and solemn proportion of the latter that the edifices of Samarkand remain without a rival. Differing circumstances in the different countries overrun by the Arabs—the influence of previous styles, local and climatic conditions, the genius of individual masters, or the traditions of particular schools—produced a wide variety of types, from the royal palace of Delhi to that of Granada, from the shrines of Shiraz and Meshed to the chapels of Palermo, from the mosques of Damascus and Cairo to those of Cordova and Kairwhan. In some places majestic outline, in others intricate detail, was the object or the achievement of the artist. Fancy was here subordinated to fundamental canons, was there allowed to run riot in complicate involution. But it cannot be doubted that the

true and essential character of the Saracenic style is expressed in grandeur rather than in delicacy, in chastity rather than in ornament. It was by the grouping of great masses, and by the artistic treatment of simple lines, that the Arab architects first impressed their genius upon the world; and in this respect no more stately product of their talent can



RUINS OF BIBI KHANYM AT SAMARKAND.

anywhere be found than in the half-fallen monuments of the city of Tamerlane.

Ruins of Bibi Khanym

The remaining ruins I must dismiss briefly. The most imposing remains at Samarkand, in bulk and dimensions, are undeniably the *medresse* and mosque of Bibi Khanym, the Chinese consort of Timur, whom the courtly Don Ruy designated as 'Caño, the chief wife of the Great Lord.' They are said to have been

INTERIOR OF MEDRESSE OF TILLAH KARI

erected respectively by the royal lady and her illustrious spouse; and it was this mosque that Timur caused to be pulled down as soon as it was finished, because the entrance was too low, and whose rebuilding he superintended with imperious energy from a litter. What these buildings once were we can only faintly realise by the aid of the colossal piles of

INTERIOR OF THE MEDRESSE OF BIBI KHANYM.

masonry that still stand, and that tower above the other ruins of Samarkand as high as do the vaulted arches of Constantine's Basilica over the southern end of the Forum at Rome. The only perfect relic in the ruined enclosure is the vast *rahle*, or lectern, which stands on nine low columns in the centre and which once bore in its V-shaped cleft a ponderous Koran. This has survived, because it is of marble instead of

brick, and therefore was too heavy for any conqueror to transport, and too solid for any vandal to destroy. The remaining parts of the building are slowly and steadily falling to ruin; and in time, unless steps are taken to arrest the process, will become a shapeless heap of bricks.

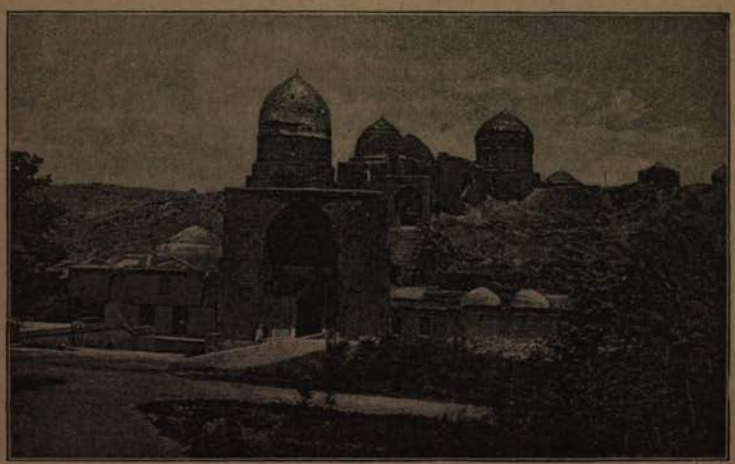
Shah Zindeh

The cluster of mosques and chapels with seven small cupolas, that bear the name of the Living King —its eponymous saint having been a near relative of the Prophet, who was martyred here in early times, and who is supposed to be lurking with his decapitated head in his hand at the bottom of a well, although with curious inconsistency his coffined body is also an object of worship in the same building—is both the most perfect and the most graceful of the ruins of Samarkand. A ruin unfortunately it is; for domes have collapsed, inscriptions have been defaced, and the most exquisite enamelling has perished. But still, as we mount the thirty-seven steps that lead upwards between narrow walls, at intervals in the masonry there open out small recessed mosques and tomb chambers with faultless honeycomb groining, executed in moulded and coloured tiles. Gladly would I expatiate upon the beauty of these Samarkandian tiles—turquoise and sapphire and green and plum-coloured and orange, crusted over with a rich siliceous glaze, and inscribed with mighty Kufic letters—by which these glorious structures were once wholly and are still in part adorned.

But it is more relevant to point out that beyond

having patched up the most glaring traces of dilapidation and made a few attempts, with deplorable results, to replace destroyed ornament, the Russians have done nothing, and are doing nothing, whatever to preserve these sacred relics either from wanton demolition or from natural decay; and that, what with the depredations of vandals, the shock of earthquakes, and the lapse of time, the visitor in the

Need of a Society for the Preservation of Ancient Monuments



MAUSOLEUM OF SHAH ZINDEH.

twentieth century may find cause to enquire with resentful surprise what has become of the fabled grandeurs of the old Samarkand. A Society for the Preservation of Ancient Monuments should at once be formed in Russian Central Asia, and a custodian should be appointed to each of the more important ruins. But this is a step which can hardly be expected from a Government which has never, outside of Russia, shown the faintest interest in antiquarian

preservation or research, and which would sit still till the crack of doom upon a site that was known to contain the great bronze Athene of Pheidias, or the lost works of Livy.

Sunset at Samarkand

While visiting the Shah Zindeh, I was the fortunate witness of one of those rare sunsets that are sometimes visible in the East, and which, though they cannot compete with the troubled grandeur of our Western skies, are yet incomparable in their tranquil glory.

The northern outside wall of Shah Zindeh is bordered by a Mussulman necropolis, which is as lugubrious and desolate-looking a spot as cemeteries in Mahometan countries usually are. Broken pillars, displaced tombstones, and desecrated brick vaults litter the drab and dusty surface. As we stood in one of the elevated courts overlooking the boundary-wall, we observed a funeral proceeding on the other side. The corpse was brought up lying loosely on a kind of open bier which resembled a sofa, and was presently tumbled without much ceremony into a ditch which had been prepared in the sandy soil. There was a large attendance of mourners, all males, who appeared to take an inquisitive interest in the proceedings, but there was no show of grief or attempt at a service. Climbing still higher up the stairway, we emerged on the hill behind the tomb-chamber of the saint. The sun was just sinking: and it was one of those superb evenings only known in the East, when for a few seconds, amid a hush as of death, we seem to realise

> The light that never was on sea or land;

and then in a moment the twilight rushes down with violet wings, and all nature swoons in her embrace. In the short space of preternatural luminousness that preceded, the broken edge of the Penjakent mountains cut the sky like blue steel and seemed to sever the Zerafshan valley from the outer world. Inside the magic circle described by their lofty shapes a splendid belt of trees plunged momentarily into a deeper and more solemn green, contrasting vividly with the purple of the mountain background. The middle space was filled by the colossal arches and riven domes of Bibi Khanym, which loomed up above the native city in all the majesty and pathos of irretrievable ruin. Below and all around, a waste of grey sand-hills was encumbered with half-fallen tombstones and mouldering graves. Here and there a horsehair plume, floating from the end of a rickety pole, betrayed the last resting-place of a forgotten sheikh or saint. The only evidence of life was supplied by the horses of the mourners, themselves out of sight at the moment, which were picketed amid the waste of graves. Presently round the corner of the mosque emerged the long line of turbaned Orientals, grave and silent. Each mounted his beast without speaking a word and rode away. At that instant a band of turquoise blue seemed to encircle the horizon and to flush upwards towards the zenith, where light amber skeins hung entangled like the filaments of a golden veil. As these drifted apart and lost the transient glory; as the turquoise deepened into sapphire and died down into dusk; as first the belt

of trees and then the outer belt of mountains was wiped out, a long cry trembled through the breathless void. It was the voice of the muezzin from a neighbouring minaret, summoning the faithful to evening prayer.

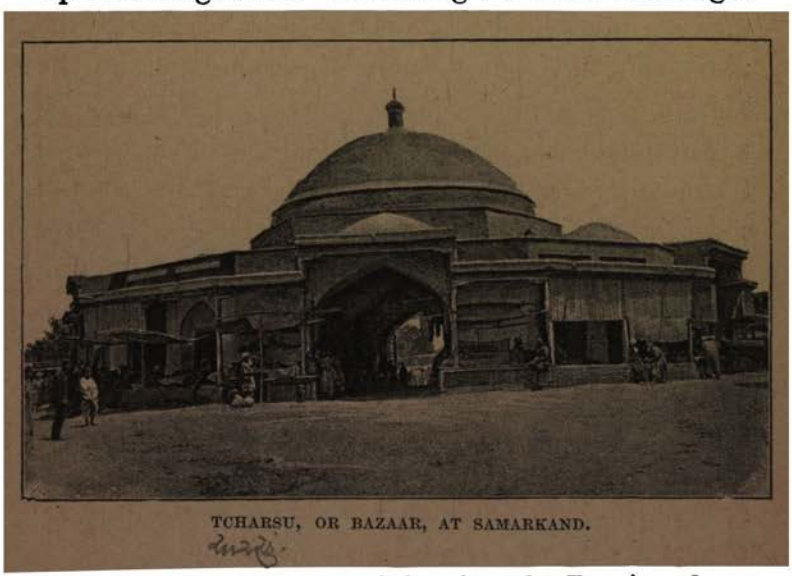
Russian garrison

I was told on high authority at Samarkand that the Russian garrison consisted entirely of Cossack regiments, and amounted to a total of 10,000 men. I doubted this statement from the first, because of the absence of any sign of such large numbers and the lack of motive for keeping so powerful a force at such a place; and my suspicions were subsequently justified by the discovery that there was only half that total of men, including but one Cossack regiment and three batteries of artillery. Here, as elsewhere, I found it excessively difficult to reconcile the conflicting utterances of my different informants, each of whom might have imparted correct information if he had been able or willing to do so. I say 'able' because I ended by forming the opinion that one of the commonest features of Russian character is a constitutional incapacity for exactitude of statement.

Population

The population of Samarkand is estimated at about 40,000 persons, of whom the Europeans number 6,000, while there are as many as 1,500 Jews. The bazaars struck me as greatly inferior in every way to those of Bokhara, and there was a marked contrast in many respects between the native life of the two cities, the one still independent, the other Russian for twenty years. In Samarkand the urban population, or Sarts, as they are here called, were much more

humbly and shabbily dressed; there was no evidence of wealth or dignity or leisure, and the street sights were generally squalid and uninteresting. Even the native bazaar has been thoroughly transformed under Russian rule, large blocks of crooked alleys having been swept away to make place for broad boulevards converging from the different points of the compass upon the Righistan. In driving the latter in straight



TCHARSU, OR BAZAAR, AT SAMARKAND.

lines through the heart of the city, the Russians have been unconsciously following an example set them nearly 500 years ago by their great forerunner Tamerlane; for again we owe to the agreeable gossip of the Spanish Ambassador of King Henry III. of Castile the knowledge that 'The lord (*i.e.* Timur) ordered a street to be made through the city, pulling down all houses that stood in the line, a street very broad and covered with a vaulted roof, and windows

to let in the light from one end of the city to the other.'

Refuge of political exiles

Samarkand has, as I have indicated, more than once been made the residence of important political refugees, whom it was to the interest of Russia to conciliate, to watch, or to entertain. Abdurrahman Khan, the present Amir of Afghanistan, was here for many years, and during his residence married a slave girl from Wakhan, who had already become the mother of his two eldest surviving sons. His cousin Is-hak, the recent pretender, who had fled with him upon the triumph of Shir Ali, shared his exile at Samarkand, and returned in his company in 1880, receiving as the reward of his assumed fidelity the governorship of Afghan Turkestan. Both of them are said to have left Samarkand with a less favourable opinion of their hosts than that with which they came, and to have roundly abused the Russians afterwards; though the attitude of Is-hak may be presumed once more to have changed, now that he is again dependent upon their hospitality, and possibly expects in the future to be indebted to them for a throne. I could not discover that at the time of my visit there were any of these interesting exiles in the city, though a rumour—denied as soon as uttered—of the return of Is-hak to his old quarters was already in circulation.

Journey to Tashkent

While at Samarkand the chance was presented to me of making under the best auspices a visit to Tashkent. Though the distance between the two places is considerable—190 miles—and can only be

covered by road, I eagerly grasped this opportunity of forming even a slight acquaintance with the capital of Russia in the East; being anxious to observe the visible effects of a dominion that has now lasted for over twenty years, to acquaint myself with the ideas that are rumoured to prevail in its military circles, and to contrast its Court life and etiquette with the analogous British *régime* at Calcutta. I also wished to form some opinion as to the feasibility of an extension of the Transcaspian line from the Zerafshan province into Turkestan.

The tarantass

It was not till I was well on my way to Tashkent that I realised how great, from the most selfish and personal point of view, the advantages of that railway had been. The luckless traveller condemned to the amenities of a tarantass across the Golodnaya, or Famished Steppe, hankers after the second-class carriages of General Annenkoff as eagerly as did the Israelites in similar surroundings after the flesh-pots of Egypt. I know that it is the fashion of English writers to decry, just as it is of Russians to extol, the tarantass; but I must confess in this case to a full and honest share in the prejudices of my countrymen. A kind of ramshackle wooden boat, resting on long wooden poles, which themselves repose on the wooden axles of wooden wheels—this is the sorrowful and springless vehicle in which two of us were to travel 380 miles, and in which travellers have often covered thousands. There is one advantage in the fabrics being entirely of wood—namely, that if it breaks down *en route*, as sooner or later it is perfectly

certain to do, its repair can be effected without much difficulty. Too nicely pieced a structure would indeed be unsuited to the conditions of Central Asian travel; for the vehicle is required to ford rivers and cross deserts, now buried in mud, now plunging heavily through sand, to resist concussions, and to emerge from mishaps that would dislocate any finer piece of workmanship. The Russians have reduced to a science the subjugation of the tarantass by means of straw and mattresses; but the less skilful Englishman, in the rough places where there is no road, is tossed about like a cork on tumbled water. Fortunately, the remaining difficulties usually associated with such a method of locomotion are here somewhat curtailed; for there is a postal service along the road between Samarkand and Tashkent, with relays of post-horses at the various stations, placed at distances of about fifteen miles apart. A *Podorojna*, or special order, must first be procured from the authorities. This entitles the traveller to a change of horses at each station; though, even so, he is far from safe, for the intimation that all the available horses are tired or unfed or still feeding, which occurs from time to time with mathematical regularity, may compel him either to wait half a day in a grim post-house in the middle of an odious desert, or to hire whatever animals he can procure from any well-disposed rustic possessing a stable in the neighbourhood. The horses are harnessed to the tarantass in a *troika—i.e.* three abreast; the middle horse between the shafts having its neck held tightly up by a bearing-rein attached to a high

wooden arch rising above its head, while the outside horses are not even confined within traces, but gallop along in random fashion, with their heads, as a rule, looking inquisitively round the corner. A different driver, Tajik, or Uzbeg, or Kirghiz, each with unmistakable physiognomy, mounts the box at each post-house, and at the end of his stage absorbs without either gratitude or protest a modest gratuity.

Stages of the route

The road to Tashkent is roughly divided into three sections by the mountain defile known as the Gates of Tamerlane and the main stream of the Syr Daria or Jaxartes; and the distances between its principal points are as follows:—

Samarkand to Jizak . . .	65 miles
Jizak to Tchinaz . . .	83 „
Tchinaz to Tashkent . . .	42 „
Total . .	190 „

Our outward journey occupied thirty hours, including halts at the post-stations; the return journey, upon which we suffered from scarcity of horses, thirty-six. Russian officers, travelling at the maximum rate of speed, have covered it in twenty-four and even in twenty-two hours.

Ruins of Afrasiab

Leaving Samarkand on the north-east, we skirt the hill Tchupan-Ata—once crowned by the great observatory of Ulug Beg, but now by the white-washed tomb of a local saint—and pass at no great distance from the mass of crumbling *tumuli* and mounds that mark the site of an ancient city, associated with the legendary hero Afrasiab, and supposed to have been the predecessor of the Maracanda

of the Greeks. Heaps of rubbish and the accumulations of centuries cover an immense extent, not unlike the ruins of Fostat or Old Cairo. Excavations have been pursued in a half-hearted and disjointed fashion by the Russians, but no deliberate or scientific effort has been made to explore whatever secrets of the past—and they must be manifold and important—the ruins of Kaleh-i-Afrasiab can tell. This is one of the many chances of the future.

Bridge of Shadman-Melik

After traversing a succession of gardens and orchards, we come at the distance of a few miles from Samarkand to the fords of the main stream of the Zerafshan. It courses swiftly along over a very stony bed, and was divided at this season of the year into four or five channels, of which none were over a foot and a half in depth. The space between its banks is, however, several hundred yards in width; and in summer, when the snows in the mountains melt, is for a short time filled by a raging torrent. Hard by are the ruins of two stupendous arches, meeting at an obtuse angle, which are called Shadman-Melik by the natives, and which tower magnificently above the attenuated volume of the autumnal stream.[1] Nothing is known of the authorship or date of these huge remains; but it is conjectured that, placed as they are close to the spot where the Zerafshan divides into two main streams—the Ak Daria or White River, and the Kara Daria or Black River—they originally bridged the two channels at the angle of bifurcation. Near the Zerafshan in this quarter are several

[1] For an illustration of them vide *De Paris à Samarkand*, p. 172.

hundreds of acres that have been planted as a nursery garden by the Russians, and where are grown vines (of which there are no less than sixteen varieties in the country), acacias, and ilanthus.

Gates of Tamerlane

Upon the other side of the river vegetation dwindles and finally disappears, and for many miles we proceed between the low hills of the Pass of Jilanuti, culminating at the northern end in a rocky portal where many a bloody conflict has been waged for the possession of the Zerafshan valley. The boastful record of two ancient conquerors is deeply incised on the smoothed face of the rock—of Ulug Beg, victorious in 1425, and of Abdullah Khan of Bokhara, Anthony Jenkinson's host, in 1571, when the inscription records that he slew 400,000 of the enemy, so that blood ran for a month in the river of Jizak. Very like in character, and not unlike, though less rugged in surroundings, are these sculptured trophies to the celebrated inscription of Trajan above the Iron Gates of the Danube in Europe. In spite of the deeds and names it commemorates, the Central Asian defile, in characteristic deference to the overpowering prestige of a single name, is known as the Gates of Tamerlane.

The Waste of Hunger

Not many miles beyond is the extensive but straggling town of Jizak, with a population of 4,000, the mouldering walls of whose former citadel serve as a forlorn reminder of the Russian victory of 1866. Then ensues the Waste of Hunger, very properly so called, for a more starved and sorry-looking region it would be difficult to conceive; and as the tarantass goes bumping along, with the bells hung in the high

wooden arch over the central horse's head jingling a wild discord, and the dust rolling up in suffocating volumes, the traveller too is very hungry for the end to arrive. He can draw but little repose or consolation from his halts at the post-houses, where a bare waiting-room with wooden tables and uncovered settees is placed at his disposal, and whose culinary resources do not rise above the meagre level of a cup of tea and a boiled egg. Any other or more extravagant rations he must bring with him.

The Syr Daria and approach to Tashkent

At length we reach the Syr Daria, or Jaxartes, the second great river of Central Asia, terminating at present, like its greater brother the Oxus, in the Aral Sea. The channel here appeared to be over a quarter of a mile wide, and flowed along with a very rapid ochreous current. Our vehicle was driven bodily on to a big ferry boat, worked by the stream, and attached to a chain, the ferry being commanded by a fort on the northern bank. Here is the Russian town of Tchinaz, at a distance of three miles from the old native Tchinaz, which was taken in 1865. Then ensues another spell of dusty rutworn desert; and our vehicle selects this opportune moment to discard one of its wheels. But patience is at length rewarded; tall snow-capped mountains, which mean water, which in its turn means verdure, rise into view; we enter the valley of the Tchirtchik and its affluents, twenty-five miles in width; and amid the sound of running water, and under the shade of broad avenues of trees, forty miles after leaving the Syr Daria we approach the suburbs of the capital of Turkestan.

Great fertility

By the suburbs of Tashkent I need not refer to the environs only; for in reality the Russian town is one vast suburb, in which the houses stand apart amid trees and gardens interspersed with open spaces. The meaning of the name is 'city of stone,' a *lucus a non lucendo* title as far as either the Russian, or the native town, is concerned, though whether it applies more strictly to the ruins of old Tashkent, twenty miles away, I cannot say. The size and height of the trees, principally poplar, acacia, and willow, with which the streets of the new town are planted in double and even in quadruple rows, and which are of course only twenty years old, give a fair indication of what irrigation and this superb climate when in partnership can do. A shoot has simply to be stuck into the ground, and the rest may safely be left to nature.

The two cities and societies

Tashkent is a very large city, for it covers an area as extensive as Paris, though with a population, not of 2,500,000, but of 120,000, of which 100,000 are congregated in the native or Sart quarter. The Russian civil and military population are computed at the same figure, 10,000 each, and so large are the enclosures or gardens in which the houses stand apart that the majority of the residents would seem to have attained the ideal of Arcadian bliss expressed elsewhere in the historical phrase, 'Three acres and a cow.' A valley bisects the two portions of the town, native and European, which are as separate in every particular as are the lives of the double element in the population, neither interfering nor appearing to

hold communication with the other. In the capitals of India, at Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras, there is far greater fusion, both in private and in public life —the Parsees at Bombay, the resident princes and noblemen at Calcutta, and the most influential native merchants in all three, mingling habitually in Anglo-Indian society, and taking a prominent part, in some cases in government, in others in the management of public institutions. In Tashkent, on the other hand, several obstacles preclude a similar amalgamation—the purely military character of the administration, the dearth of any wealthy or capable men among the natives, and the recency of the Russian conquest. I remember once reading the remark that 'In Russia the discipline of the camp is substituted for the order of the city; martial law is the normal condition of life;' and of no Russian city that I have seen did this strike me as more true than of Tashkent. Uniforms are everywhere, parade-grounds and barracks abound, the extensive *entourage* associated with a great administrative centre is military and not civil in character. It is hardly surprising that under such a system practical or far-seeing projects for commercial and industrial development should not be forthcoming; that the fiscal balance should be habitually on the wrong side of the budget; or that Chauvinistic and aggressive ideas should prevail. Where the ruling class is entirely military, and where promotion is slow, it would be strange if war, the sole available avenue to distinction, were not popular.

Tashkent is, perhaps, less than it used to be, the

ROMANOFF STREET IN RUSSIAN TASHKENT

refuge of damaged reputations and shattered fortunes, whose only hope of recovery lay in the chances afforded on the battlefield. But it is still the compulsory place of exile to which the young spendthrift and the veteran offender are equally consigned, the official purgatory following upon the Emperor's displeasure. One of the principal houses is inhabited by a Grand Duke, a first cousin of the Czar, who is said to be a very *mauvais sujet.* He married the daughter of a police-officer at Orenburg, and is reported to drink and to beat his wife. The exile of this degenerate scion of royalty is understood to be lifelong.

Political banishment

I have already, in an earlier chapter, spoken of the rumours that had prevailed in the military circles of Tashkent, shortly before my visit, of an impending invasion of Afghanistan. It is therefore with pleasure that I record the fact that the present Governor-General (General Rosenbach), whose hospitality I was fortunate enough to enjoy, bears a very different reputation—having, it is said, been appointed by the present Emperor to create a diversion from the adventurous policy of his predecessors, Kaufmann and Tchernaieff, and in order to develop more carefully the moral and material resources of the country. If I may judge from the general's own words, it is in the latter object that he has himself been principally interested. For he spoke to me of the enormous growth in the produce of cotton, the export of which from Tashkent has multiplied twenty-five-fold in the last five years; and when, mindful of the old charge

General Rosenbach and a peace policy

that the Russians have done nothing to improve the mental and moral condition of the subject population, I enquired whether any steps had been taken to open schools for the natives, he informed me that four such schools had been started in Tashkent, with an attendance of from thirty to forty at each, though at present the natives exhibit no great desire to learn, and that similar institutions had been started in Khokand, Hodjent, Katta Kurgan, and Samarkand. He also told me that an infirmary had been opened for native women in the capital, and was largely resorted to by them. Differing from Mr. Schuyler, who wrote that 'Tashkent is not a manufacturing nor an agricultural centre, nor is it a trade centre,' he regarded his capital as the natural and physical nucleus of Central Asian trade, and did not anticipate that its supremacy would be endangered by the greater advantages now enjoyed by Samarkand. General Rosenbach has now been for four years in Turkestan; and while I was there was said to be likely to leave for some less onerous post in Russia. I fancy, however, that his own inclinations would, and I am confident that public interests should, induce him to devote a somewhat longer time to the further development of this still backward country.

Native education

Touching Russian schools for the natives, I may supplement what the general told me by the following facts. It was in December 1884 that the first of these schools was opened in native Tashkent, forty children being selected from the best Sart families to

profit by the preliminary experiment. This was so successful that two other schools were soon opened, while many Sart families began to employ Russian teachers. By 1886, eighteen such schools had been started in Russian Central Asia: a satisfactory though a modest beginning compared with the 4,000 educational institutions of the Moslems. It has since been suggested that a Russian class should be added compulsorily to the latter, which are already richly endowed by the *Vakufs* of deceased benefactors, so as to precipitate the desired Russification of the native peoples.[1]

Government House

Benefiting by the hospitality of Government House, I had some opportunity of observing the style in which the Yarim Padishah, or Half-King, as he is described in Central Asia, represents the Imperial Government. Schuyler, in his book and in the report which he penned for the American Government, drew a vivid picture of the state kept up by Kaufmann, who never went out without an escort of 100 mounted Cossacks, who permitted no one to sit down in his presence, and whose return to Tashkent was always signalised by triumphal arches and the firing of cannon. General Rosenbach has very different ideas; and the Government House *ménage* is now pushed to the extreme of simplicity—an example

[1] M. Séménoff, in the article before quoted from the *Proceedings of the Russian Imperial Geographical Society* for 1888, says that the Russian schools were at first only attended by the poor, but that they are now patronised by the richest native families. He also mentions the medical dispensaries for the natives at Tashkent. Vaccination is there performed, the lymph being furnished by the patients.

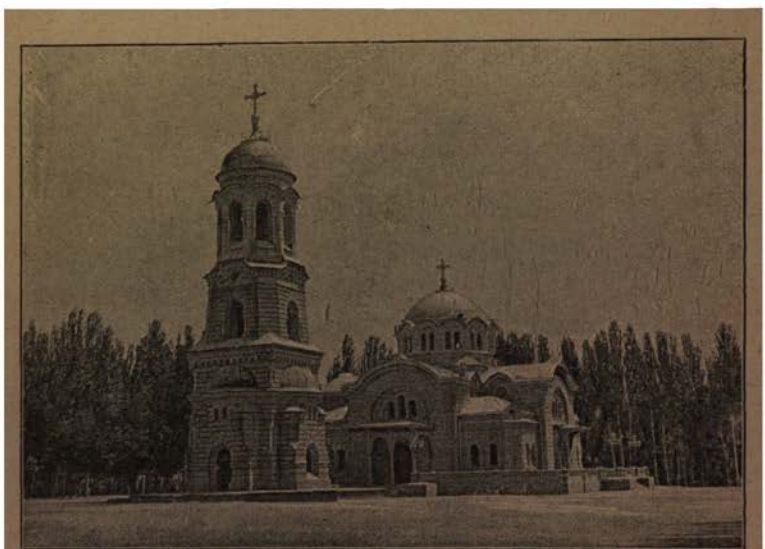
which, while its effect upon the native population is immaterial, there being no class of sufficient importance to be dazzled by a show, is unquestionably of great service to the Russian military circles, in which the most reckless extravagance used formerly to prevail. Madame de Ujfalvy-Bourdon in her book spoke of Government House as 'a veritable palace, with a truly splendid interior, which could not be surpassed in any capital in Europe;' but I fancy that her faculty of perspective must have been temporarily disorganised by the prior experiences of a tarantass and the Kirghiz Steppes. As a matter of fact, its furniture and appointments are almost jejune in their modesty. The only two large rooms, the ball-room and the dining-room, are practically unfurnished. There is no throne-room or daïs; and the only emblems of royalty are the oil-paintings of the late Czar and his wife, and of the present Emperor and Empress, which hang upon the walls. The general is very proud of an ante-chamber or smoking-room, the panels and coffered cornices of which have been entirely carved and painted in Oriental style by Sart workmen, and upholstered with divans of parti-coloured Bokharan velvet. When he drives out, his landau is drawn by a *troika* of three handsomely caparisoned horses, whilst the livery affected by his Tartar coachman is a black velvet cap with peacock feathers stuck in the brim. I cannot imagine a greater contrast to the state observed by the Indian Viceroy, who in a country famed for its lavish ostentation, its princely wealth, and its titled classes,

is obliged to support the style of a sovereign, who resides in a palace, the corridors of which are crowded with gorgeous figures in scarlet and gold liveries, who drives out accompanied by a brilliant escort, and whose levées are as rigid in their etiquette as those of Buckingham Palace or St. James'. Behind the Government House at Tashkent extends a beautiful garden, in which a military band plays, and to which the public are admitted three times a week. It contains shaded walks and sylvan retreats, a respectable cascade formed by an artificial dam, and a pit for bears, which was kept filled by Tchernaieff, who had a craze for animals, until one of his pets nearly bit off the leg of a Kirghiz. In addition to this town residence, the Governor-General has a summer villa in the suburbs, corresponding to the Indian Viceroy's country house at Barrackpore.

Public buildings

In the neighbourhood of Government House are the principal public buildings of the city, for the most part of an exceedingly plain and unpretentious character. A new cathedral had just been completed, and the detached bell-tower was about to receive its noisy inmate. The Russians seem to have a passion for bells, perhaps derived from the ownership of the biggest bell in the world at Moscow. The form of the buildings is that with which Russia had already made me familiar—a low squat dome surmounting the centre with half domes abutting upon its sides. It contains a somewhat gaudy iconostasis, or altar screen, painted partly by amateur, partly by native talent. When I visited it, the choir, composed

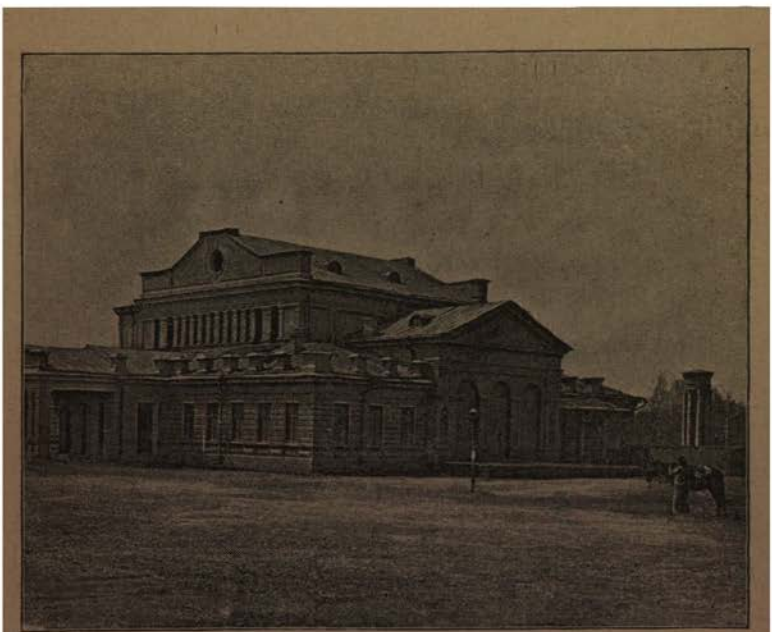
entirely of soldiers, was practising; no uncommon spectacle on Russian soil, the Russians being pre-eminently a singing people, singing at work and singing at play, and carrying with them into the steppes of Asia the songs and staves and choruses of Europe. The older and now disused cathedral stands a short distance away. In a public garden



NEW RUSSIAN CATHEDRAL AT TASHKENT.

near the road are situated the grave and monument of Kaufmann, the first Governor-General of Turkestan and founder of Russian Tashkent, and a man possessing certain, though limited, attributes of greatness. The most pretentious building in the Russian town is undoubtedly the Club House, upon which the most unnecessary amount of money was said originally to have been spent, and which contains an enormous

circular ball-room, where dances are held on Sunday nights, and which would, I should think, accommodate quite double the dancing population of Tashkent. These military clubs, with their billiards and gambling and their weekly *réunions* and balls, are a regular feature of Russian life in every town where

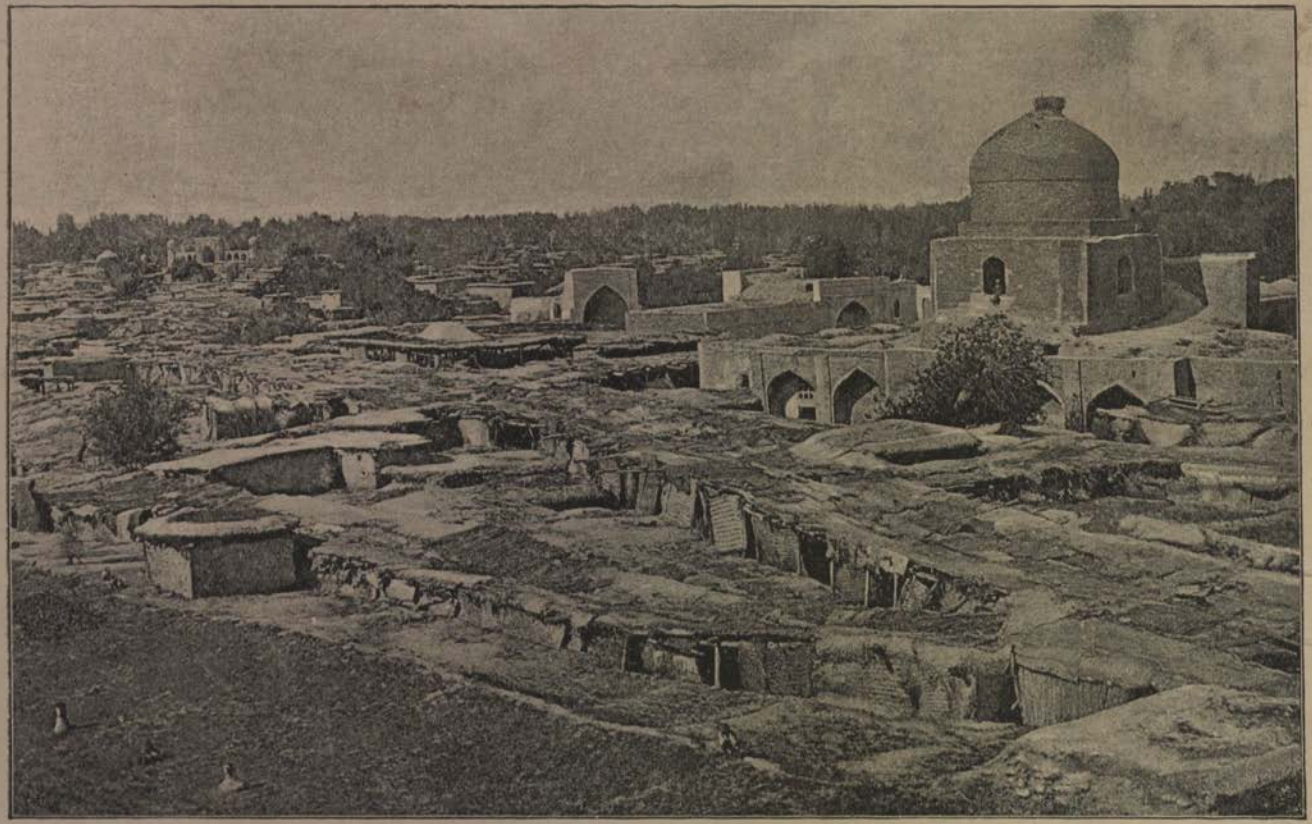


MILITARY CLUB AT TASHKENT.

troops are stationed; they combine the advantages of an officers' mess with those of an English club and of a *casino* in a foreign town. Of the other buildings the principal are an observatory, a large military hospital, a theatre, and a museum of Central Asian antiquities, flora, fauna, and products, a collection which is still in its infancy, and stands in urgent

need both of scientific arrangement and of funds.[1] It contains a number of prehistoric objects, found in the steppes, of old bronzes dug up at Samarkand and elsewhere, of specimen tiles from vanished mosques, and of stuffed birds and animals. Among other objects I saw a poor specimen of an *ovis poli*, and a preserved *reshta*, the horrible worm which is absorbed into the human system by drinking the water of the Zerafshan at Bokhara and elsewhere, and which I have already described in my last chapter. It resembled a thread of vermicelli, being a light yellow in colour, and when uncoiled must have been nearly a yard long. Attached to the museum at Tashkent is a library originally amassed for the Chancellery of the Governor-General, and containing the best collection of works on Central Asia published since the year 1867 that is to be found in the world. Not only books and pamphlets, but even magazine and newspaper articles, are admitted to this collection, in which I am driven to think that these humble pages may some day repose. This library is supported by a small subsidy from the state. It has been catalogued and arranged in chronological order by Mr. V. L. Mejoff, who continues to publish at St. Petersburg a series of volumes entitled 'Recueil du Turkestan,' in which every addition appears duly chronicled, and which is already the most complete bibliography of the Central Asian Question in existence.

[1] M. Séménoff says that this museum ought to have been located at Samarkand, as offering a wider field for archæological investigation, and as being less subject to earthquakes than Tashkent.

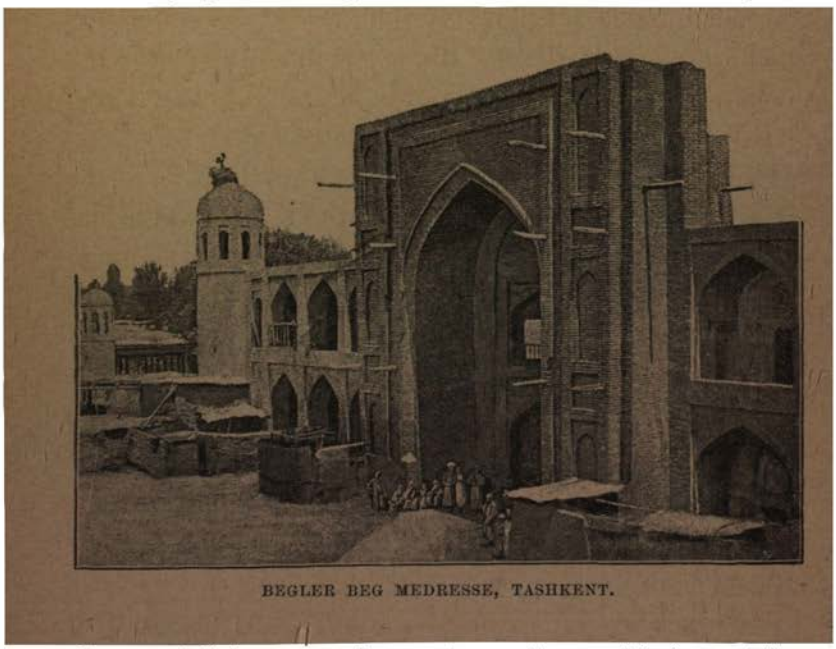


PANORAMA OF NATIVE TASHKENT

Ancient or native city

I have devoted the greater part of my space to describing the modern city of Tashkent, because it is as much the centre of attraction to a traveller with political interests as is the European in contradistinction to the native quarter of Calcutta. Just the inverse was the case at Bokhara and Samarkand. The native or Sart city of Tashkent cannot, however, be altogether ignored, for it is three times as extensive as that of Samarkand, and contains as large a population as that of the whole of Bokhara. It was taken by storm by Tchernaieff with a force of only 1,950 men on June 29, 1865. Since then the greater part of the old wall with its twelve gates has been demolished; although, being situated on the opposite side of a ravine, it is still wholly separated from the Russian town. Its tightly packed population, divided into four quarters and forty wards, comprises a floating element of Kashgarians, Bokhariots, Persians, and Afghans, and a sedentary majority of Kirghiz, Tartars, Jews, Hindus, Gypsies, and Sarts, the latter being the generic title for an urban as distinguished from a nomad people. Viewed from above, as from the large recently restored mosque which overlooks the bazaar, we see nothing but an inclined plane of dusty roofs, the dearth of colour making it as ugly as are most Oriental towns from the panoramic point of view. The real interest and individuality are confined to the streets and, could we but penetrate their interiors, to the houses. In a spectacular sense the bazaars are as interesting as any that I saw in Central Asia, for the Russians, while destroying much

of the labyrinthine intricacy of the old trading quarter, in order to construct new streets and shops, have built these in strict conformity with the native style, the only difference being that more spacious shops open on to a broader street than the ordinary, the sun here and there finding a chink in the reed matting spread on poles overhead, and throwing a



BEGLER BEG MEDRESSE, TASHKENT.

lance of light upon the variegated crowd below. The Jews, since the Russian conquest, no longer suffer from the disabilities under which their fellow-countrymen still labour at Bokhara.

General Prjevalski and Lhasa

While at Tashkent I heard that the well-known Russian explorer, General Prjevalski, with two other Russian officers, Lieutenants Roborovski and Kozlof, and M. Bogdanovitch, a mining engineer, had passed

through the capital a few weeks before, and had there collected an escort of seventeen Cossacks with which he hoped to penetrate to the mysterious residence of the Grand Lama of Thibet. This was the fifth semi-scientific semi-political expedition which the general had planned to the Thibetan interior; and circumstances combined to make the present opportunity a more favourable one for reaching and obtaining admission to Lhasa than had ever yet occurred; for with a little war between England and Thibet dragging its tedious length along, the Dalai Lama might find it politic to make a breach in the Chinese wall of exclusion by which his capital has hitherto been shut out from the world, in favour of the one nation whose rivalry with England might enable them to give him a substantial *quid pro quo*. Politics might easily be cloaked and disguised under the garb of science; but few sensible men doubted that if General Prjevalski ever entered Lhasa, he would not leave it without some sort of treaty in his pocket. These speculations, however, were rudely dashed by the news which arrived a few weeks later that the intrepid explorer had died on his way at Verny, the Russian frontier town upon the borders of Kulja, from an illness which had doubtless been aggravated, if not caused, by the sufferings and hardships experienced in his earlier journeys. Englishmen of every shade of opinion will unite with Russians in deploring the loss of a man who deserves to be ranked with Livingstone and Stanley in this century as a pioneer of scientific exploration in an unknown

and perilous continent. It has since been announced in the Russian papers that he has been succeeded in command of the expedition by Colonel Pevtsoff, of the General Staff, and that the party were to start afresh in the spring. For the expenses of the expedition a sum of 7,000*l.* has been allowed. At the same time M. Joseph Martin, a French scientific explorer, is to proceed from Pekin in the direction of Eastern Thibet; and the two parties hope to join hands at Lhasa in 1890.

Statistics of population

I append a number of statistics which may be found of interest. According to a return prepared by M. Kostenko, chief of the Asiatic Department of the General Staff of the Russian Army, the most recent figures of the population of Russian Central Asia were in 1885 as follows :—

Date of Acquisition		Population
	Russian acquisitions before 1867 . .	1,059,214
1868	Zerafshan	200,000
1870	Kohistan	31,488
1873	Amu Daria	109,665
1874	Transcaspia	57,200
1875	Namangan	127,216
1876	Ferghana, Alai, and the Pamir . .	602,345
1881	Akhal Tekke	34,690
„	Part of Kulja	56,720
1884	Merv, Tejend, Atek, Yuletan, Sarakhs, and Penjdeh	170,000
		2,448,538
Non-Russian Turkestan	Khiva	400,000
	Bokhara	2,000,000
	Afghan territory[1] . .	642,000
		5,490,538

[1] What the Afghan territory may be, alluded to by M. Kostenko as subject to Russian influence, I do not know. He may allude to the

Another table of statistics, published in the Russian Journal of the Ministry of Finance in 1885, gave the population of Turkestan as follows, the figures being uniformly higher than those of M. Kostenko:—

District	Extent	Sedentary Population	Nomad Population	Total Population
	Square Versts[1]			
Syr Daria	416,750	500,000	654,000	1,154,000
Zerafshan	23,250	360,000	—	360,000
Ferghana	85,000	540,000	150,000	690,000
Amu Daria	86,000	30,000	101,000	131,000
Total .	611,000	1,430,000	905,000	2,335,000

A still further increase is registered by the following figures, which appeared in the 'Moscow Gazette' of May 1889: Syr Daria, 1,214,000; Zerafshan, 394,000; Ferghana, 716,000; Amu Daria, 133,630.

In Russian Central Asia there is only 1·8 inhabitant to every square verst, as compared with 19·3 in European Russia, 17·9 in Caucasia, and 71·4 in Poland, the most thickly populated section of the Empire. But Siberia is even more sparsely peopled, for there the proportion is only 0·4. The proportion of females to males in Central Asia is 90·2 to 100, as compared with 101·2 in European Russia, 87·9 in Caucasia, 93·2 in Siberia, and 104 in Poland. The total population of the entire empire, in both conti-

districts adjacent to the new Russo-Afghan frontier, or to Afghan Turkestan, or to the provinces on the upper Oxus. Generally speaking, M. Kostenko's figures are below the mark; and in the case of the Merv and Akhal Turkomans I have substituted later returns. We may roughly compute the present population of Turkestan and Transcaspia (including Khiva and Bokhara, which are effectively Russianised) as 6,000,000.

[1] A square verst = ·44 of a square mile.

nents, for 1885 (the latest year for which the figures are available), was 108,787,235.

Resources, manufactures, and commerce

From the report already quoted, and from other sources, I derive the following information. Of 152,500,000 acres in Turkestan, 70,000,000 are useless either for pasture or cultivation, consisting of steppes, mountains, or sands; 75,000,000 are available only for pasture; and of the remaining 7,500,000, 5,000,000 are under cultivation, and 2,500,000 are prairie-lands. The principal cereals grown are wheat, rice, sorghum, millet, and barley. Among textile products, cotton occupies the first place, flax and hemp the second and third. Kitchen gardening is widely extended, particularly for melons and potatoes. The mean annual production of the cultivated lands in thousands of pouds is as follows: Wheat, 17,000; rice, 10,000; sorghum, 8,800; millet, 5,400; barley, 3,100; other cereals, 3,600; total, 47,900. The nomads of the Syr Daria and Amu Daria districts raise annually 3,000,000 pouds of corn. The cotton crop of the districts of Zerafshan, Kuraminsk, and Khojent is estimated at 400,000 pouds, of Ferghana at 150,000 pouds. Over 1,500 acres have been planted with American cotton. In the mountainous regions horticulture is extensively pursued, and occupies an area of 250,000 acres, the principal fruits being vines, apples, pears, cherries, plums, mulberries, and nuts. The dried fruits of Turkestan are sent to the most remote districts of Siberia and to the southern parts of Russia. Sericulture is one of the main branches of industrial occupation, the figures of annual produce

being as follows: Ferghana, 15,000 pouds; Zerafshan, 10,000; Khojent, 3,000; Tchimkent and Turkestan, 2,000; Bokhara, 60,000; Khiva, 3,000; Kashgar, 10,000; total spun-silk from Central Asia, 103,000 pouds, which, at the price of 125 roubles the poud, gives an annual revenue of nearly 13,000,000 roubles (1,300,000*l.*). The figures of cattle in Turkestan are as follows: Sheep and goats, 4,810,000; horses, 645,000; camels, 382,200; horned cattle, 525,000; total 6,362,000. The fisheries at the mouth of the Syr Daria and in the Aral Sea bring in an annual revenue of about 10,000*l.*, the sale of skins and furs 55,000*l.* The mineral riches of Turkestan are not yet properly developed, with the exception of some coal-mines in the neighbourhood of Khojent, which produce about 750,000 pouds of coal a year. A Russian engineer, sent to Central Asia on a special scientific mission, has recently (1889) reported that the oil-wells at Penjakent, near Samarkand, contain at least nine billions of pounds of perfectly pure oil. Factories and workshops for native manufactures have greatly increased, and present the following figures: Syr Daria district, 720 workshops, 3,000 artisans, 140,000*l.* annual produce; Ferghana, 420 workshops, 2,000 artisans, 80,000*l.* produce; Zerafshan, 520 workshops, 1,000 artisans, 60,000*l.* produce; Amu Daria, two workshops, fifty artisans, 5,000*l.* produce; total, 1,662 workshops, 6,050 artisans, 285,000*l.* produce. The most important manufactories, belonging to the Russians, are forty in number, including twelve distilleries of brandy with an annual revenue of 50,000*l.*,

five tobacco factories, four of leather, two for the cleaning of cotton, one of oil, and one of glass.

Among the numerous small native manufactures, the principal are the spinning and weaving of silk. The small workshops in Ferghana turn out more than 100,000*l.* worth of silk, and about 30,000*l.* of cotton stuffs. From private dwellings nearly 400,000 yards of home-spun cotton are supplied to the army. There is also a considerable production of carpets and woollen stuffs. It is impossible to give exact figures of the commerce of Turkestan. The volume of yearly trade in the three principal towns of Tashkent, Khokand, and Samarkand has been estimated at 1,000,000*l.*, but this estimate is far below the actual total. The relative shares were (in 1881) apportioned as follows:—

Export Trade from Turkestan.

To the Fair of Nijni Novgorod	£500,000
„ „ Irbit	50,000
„ „ Krestovski	50,000
To the Fairs of the Steppes	100,000
„ Orenburg and Orsk	130,000
„ Troitsk	100,000
„ Petropavlosk	50,000
„ Semipalatinsk and Semirechinsk	100,000
Total	£1,080,000

Import Trade to Turkestan.

From Orenburg and Orsk	£550,000
„ Troitsk	200,000
„ Petropavlosk	150,000
„ Semipalatinsk and Semirechinsk	100,000
„ the Fairs of the Steppes	200,000
Total	£1,200,000

The export trade from Turkestan to the Khanates of Khiva and Bokhara and the Chinese possessions in Kashgaria was, in 1884, 600,000*l.*, the import trade 550,000*l.* Between 1866 and 1885 the commerce of Turkestan was doubled. Among Russian articles exported to Turkestan, the principal are woollen and cotton tissues, leather, hardware, and trimmings for clothing. Turkestan retaliates principally with cattle, and with about 100,000*l.* worth of tea from India.

System of government

In 1886 a decree was promulgated, ordaining a new administration of the government of Turkestan, which came into operation on January 1, 1887. Under this system the country is divided into three provinces, the Syr Daria and Amu Daria districts, Ferghana, and Zerafshan, administered by military governors with extended powers, and subdivided into fifteen sub-districts, in which administrative and police powers are assigned to district chiefs, and which sub-districts are further partitioned into small areas controlled by commissioners of police. The general legislation of the Empire is only applied in Turkestan to Finance, Education, and the Postal and Telegraphic Service. In other departments important deviations have been introduced, particularly in those of Justice, the Land Laws, and Taxation. There are two kinds of Tribunals, those in which Russian law prevails, as in the rest of the Empire; and popularly elected local benches, possessing jurisdiction only over natives for petty offences and in insignificant civil cases, and adjudicating according to native custom. As regards

the agrarian system, hereditary proprietary rights, where consecrated by long usage, have been recognised in the case of sedentary rural populations. Unoccupied lands and virgin forests are appropriated by the state, but are commonly left in the temporary occupation of nomads, enjoying absolute proprietary rights over their buildings and fixtures. Land transfer among the natives is determined by local custom, between natives and foreigners by the written law. Allotments of state lands, up to a maximum of twenty-five acres, are made to Russian soldiers belonging to the Reserve. The sedentary population pay a land-tax to the Government, the nomads a house or tent-tax of four roubles per *Kibitka*. The land-tax is assessed as follows: ten per cent. on the gross produce of lands under artificial irrigation, fixed for a period of six years; and ten per cent., fixed yearly, on the net profits of cultivation of unirrigated lands.

Revenue and expenditure

I have been unable, in spite of efforts, to procure before going to press the latest statistics of revenue and expenditure in Turkestan. In the face of a continued deficit and in the absence of parliamentary control, the Russians are not anxious to publish figures that might give the enemy occasion to blaspheme. There is little doubt that ever since the annexation they have only worked their Central Asian provinces at a loss. General Kuropatkin admitted that in the first ten years, from 1868–1878, the total deficit amounted to 6,700,000*l.*—the expenditure on civil administration having been 2,400,000*l.*, and on military admini-

stration 7,500,000*l.* (a significant proportion); while the returns in revenue from the country amounted only to 3,200,000*l.* To what extent the second decade has recouped Russia for the sacrifices of the first it is impossible exactly to ascertain; but we are hazarding no risky assumption if we believe that the balance is yet very far from being wiped out.[1]

Territorial expansion of Russia

As I am upon figures, I add the following, which give some idea of the enormous territorial expansion of Russia, in Europe, and still more in Asia. At the accession of Peter the Great in 1682, the Russian Empire covered 1,696,000 square miles in Europe, 3,922,000 in Asia. At his death in 1725 the figures were 1,738,000 in Europe, and 4,092,000 in Asia; while the total census was then only 14,000,000. At the present date the extent is 2,110,436 square miles in Europe, and 6,451,847 in Asia, or a total of 8,562,283 square miles (of which 94,535 have been acquired since 1881); while the census, which in 1885 fell just short of 109,000,000, is said now to be nearer 120,000,000.

[1] M. Séménoff says that the Turkestan budget now shows an annual surplus of 200,000*l.* of receipts over expenditure, *not* including the cost of the army and military administration. This shows how serious the deficit must still be.

CHAPTER VIII

EXTENSIONS AND EFFECTS OF THE TRANSCASPIAN RAILWAY

There were his young barbarians all at play.
BYRON, *Childe Harold.*

Extension to Tashkent—Its advantages—Bourdalik and Karshi Line—Tcharjui and Kerki branch—Herat extension—Merv and Penjdeh branch—Proposed junction with the Indian railway system—Grave drawbacks—(i.) Fiscal, (ii.) Political—Favourable estimate of the Transcaspian Railway—Possible strain in time of war—Political effects of the railway—Absorption of Turkomania—Influence upon Persia—Increased prestige of Russia—Commercial effects—Annenkoff's prophecies—Commercial policy and success of Russia—Russian economic policy of strict protection—Its operation in Central Asia—Russian trade with Afghanistan—Imports and exports—Anglo-Indian transit trade—British trade with Afghanistan—Quotation from Foreign Office Report—Russian monopoly in Northern Persia and Khorasan—Destruction of British trade with Northern Persia—Commercial future of the Transcaspian Railway—Strategical consequences of the line—Shifting of centre of gravity in Central Asia—Greater proximity of base—Comparison of present with former facilities—Russian power of attack—Lines of invasion: (i.) Caspian and Herat Line—Strength and location of the Russian forces in Transcaspia—Reinforcements from Europe—Difficulty of Caspian marine transport—Latest figures—Difficulty of landing-places—Difficulty of supplies—Serious in Transcaspia—Importance of Khorasan—Complicity of Persia—Addition to offensive power of Russia—(ii.) Strength and utility of Turkestan Army—Total Russian strength for invasion—Strength of Anglo-Indian Army for offensive purposes—British and Russian reinforcements—The issue—Russian views of the Transcaspian Railway as a means of offence.

Extension to Tashkent

HAVING now carried my readers to the furthest point of my journey, I propose in this chapter to deal with

possible or contemplated extensions of the Transcaspian Railway, and to estimate its consequences, political, commercial, and strategical, in Central Asia. There is no doubt that if Tashkent is approached by rail it will now be not in the first place from the north, but by a continuation from Samarkand. The physical obstacles to the construction of such a line are insignificant; though more cutting and embankment would be necessitated than along the Transcaspian route. Two stable and permanent bridges would, moreover, be required over the straggling channels of the Zerafshan and over the Syr Daria. M. Mestcherin told me at St. Petersburg that the difficulty and expense of building these bridges would, in his opinion, postpone the suggested extension, which would be rendered the less necessary by the gradual transference to Samarkand of the mercantile and eventually, perhaps, of the administrative business now centred in Tashkent. General Rosenbach also recognised a probable cause of delay in the cost of the bridges, but did not agree in the hypothesis of an ultimate deposition of the present capital in favour of Samarkand. I drew from his remarks the inference that in his judgment the connection of the two places by rail will not be very long postponed—a conclusion at which I should arrive myself with even greater confidence, on the *a priori* ground that, the Transcaspian Railway having been built for strategical purposes, the Russians are not in the least likely to be deterred by a gap of less than 200 miles from linking together the two bases of operations and lines of

advance, the twin arms, so to speak, of the forceps, whose firm grip may one day be required to draw the teeth of England in Central Asia. A railway from Tashkent to Samarkand would enable the Russians to utilise the military resources not merely of Turkestan, but even of Omsk, the nearest military district of Siberia, and to place upon the Oxus at Tcharjui, at Kerki, or at Kilif, a second army as large in numbers, and in as short a space of time, as the main force advancing from the Caspian *viâ* Sarakhs. The one would menace Balkh, Bamian, and Kabul, the other Herat and Kandahar; and a British or Afghan army would have to divide its strength in order to confront the double danger.

Its advantages

Political and commercial reasons recommend the same extension. Turkestan has hitherto been dependent upon the laborious caravan routes across the Kirghiz steppes from Orenburg. Transport along these occupied at the quickest from four to six weeks, and sometimes in the winter four or five months. A Governor-General journeying at full speed from his seat of government to St. Petersburg, or *vice versâ*, spent three weeks upon the road. Its extreme isolation severed Tashkent from the world, and in the absence of intercourse and dearth of any but telegraphic communication, fostered a mischievous and even foolhardy spirit of independence. Closer correspondence with European Russia and the capital will, politically speaking, be a gain to the peace, rather than to the war party. From the commercial point of view the connection of Tashkent with a

railway system will prove similarly advantageous. Already both the import and export trades of Ferghana and Turkestan have been diverted to a large extent to the railway, even though carried no further than Samarkand. When the rails have been prolonged to Tashkent, it will monopolise the entire traffic, at least with Southern Russia. Not the least important among its effects will be the stimulus that may thus be given to the cotton-planting industry of Turkestan, which has already attained large dimensions, and to which the Russians look in the future to render themselves wholly independent of foreign supply. So certain indeed do I feel of the extension of the line to Tashkent as an event of the near future, that I would even hazard the prediction that it will ultimately be continued thence northwards to Orenburg,[1] or perhaps to some other point further east on the Central Siberian Railway, which is now being planned across Northern Asia, and which is to run *viâ* Tomsk to Irkutsk;[2] and that so one part at least of Lesseps' original design will be completed, though in an inverse direction, and there will be a circular railway extending from Moscow and returning again to it, through the heart of the Asian continent. I do not say that this will be effected in ten or even twenty years, but that it will come as the logical corollary to the

[1] The Russian Ministry of Public Ways has already in the past summer applied for funds in order to make surveys for a line from Samara *viâ* Orenburg to Tashkent.

[2] According to the official scheme recently approved by a special commission, the line is to run from Zlatoust, through Kurgan, Omsk, Tomsk, and Kansk to Irkutsk; and ultimately *viâ* Southern Baikal, Possolskaia, Chita, Stretensk, and Khabarooka, to Vladivostok on the Pacific.

Transcaspian Railway I have little doubt. Branches to Khokand and elsewhere will naturally follow.

Bourdalik-Karshi Line

When the surveys for General Annenkoff's railway were being made the idea was discussed of approaching the Amu Daria at a point considerably to the south of Tcharjui, and of selecting Bourdalik, about half way between Tcharjui and Kerki, for the point of crossing. This would have been a more direct route by nearly fifty miles from Merv to Samarkand, which would have been reached *viâ* the Bokharan town of Karshi. On the other hand, it would have involved a rather longer stretch of the sand desert, and would have missed the more populous and fertile portions of the Khanate, and the capital itself, great advantages, both commercial and political, from the opening of which to traffic were rightly anticipated by the Russian authorities. These considerations decided them in favour of the Tcharjui route; and the more southern line is not now spoken of.

Tcharjui-Kerki branch

In another form, however, the project of bringing the upper Oxus into communication with the Transcaspian system has lately been revived, viz. in the scheme of a railway along the left bank of the Oxus from Tcharjui, either to Kerki, the most advanced military station of Russia on the river, which was occupied in May 1887, or to Bosaga, the frontier post in the district of Khamiab. It was hoped originally that the need for such an undertaking would be obviated by the success of the Oxus flotilla, which was intended to supply the principal means of advance in that direction But the precarious fortune of the

navigation, to which I have previously referred, has shaken these expectations; and when the recent scare occurred on the borders of Afghan Turkestan in the spring of 1889, it was announced that the Russians had decided to carry forward the railway to Khamiab. This was in all probability a piece of bravado; and it is unlikely that this branch will be immediately taken in hand. Should it be constructed in the future, there can be no misconception as to its character and object. These will be purely strategical; and they will amount to a military menace against Afghan Turkestan.

Herat extension

An even more interesting question is the southerly extension of the existing line from some point near the Afghan frontier in the direction of Herat. In an earlier chapter I mentioned Dushak as the southernmost station of the present railway and a possible starting-point of future advance. When Russia first pushed forward to and beyond Askabad, the boundary region between Turkomania, Persia, and Afghanistan was so little known that the officials themselves could form no opinion as to the possibility of conducting a railway in near vicinity to the Afghan frontier. These doubts were for ever set at rest by the memorable expeditions of the Russian engineer M. Lessar, in the winter of 1881, the spring of 1882, and again in 1883. Skilfully and exhaustively surveying this *terra incognita* right up to the walls of Herat, he showed that the physical and engineering difficulties of such a project were purely chimerical, and resolved the impassable mountain barrier, by which the fond

fancy of an uninstructed generation had believed Herat to be defended on the north, into a chain of low hills, crossed by a pass about the same height above the surrounding country as the highest point of the Mendip Hills above the Bristol Channel. From Dushak to Sarakhs the line would traverse a level plain; from Sarakhs it would follow the east bank of the Heri Rud through a country, now flat, now undulating, but nowhere difficult. Crossing the Paropamisus range by a pass over the Barkhut hills, it would finally debouch upon Kuhsan, sixty-five miles over the level to Herat. Were this the direction adopted by the Russian authorities, Dushak would constitute the obvious point of deviation, while Sarakhs and Pul-i-Khatun would naturally figure as stations upon the Herat branch.

Merv-Penjdeh branch

Later topographical surveys, however, as well as other considerations, have latterly served to bring to the front the rival project of an extension from Merv up the valley of the Murghab to Penjdeh and the confluence with the Kushk; and I am authorised by M. Lessar to say that he has himself abandoned his preference for the earlier scheme. Under these circumstances we may expect that if an extension towards the frontier is contemplated in these parts, this will be the line of advance. Upon the spot no very precise information was procurable. Plans were said not yet to have been prepared. There seemed, however, to be a consensus of opinion that sooner or later the southerly extension would be taken in hand, a few persons assigning to it the first place on the

programme of construction. Some conflict may be expected between the peace party and the war party on the subject, the former agitating for the extension to Tashkent, which would be mainly of commercial advantage, the latter for that to Sarakhs or Penjdeh, which would be a purely military operation, and the meaning of which the most elementary knowledge of the conditions will teach. Herat, already at the mercy of Russia, would be placed literally within her clutch. She might not care to violate the Afghan frontier and run the risk of war with England by pushing on the rails to Herat itself; but her terminus would be within a few days' march of 'the key of India,' and the occurrence of any internal complication might give the signal for the short remaining advance. Englishmen are already beginning to prepare themselves for a Russian occupation of Herat, not with equanimity, because such a step cannot fail to involve war, and if effected, must certainly entail a loss of British prestige, but as the next forward move of Russia in the Central Asian game. I shall not be surprised if many now living see a Russian railway station at Herat in their time.

Proposed junction with the Indian railway system

I come now to the question of the suggested extension of the line through the heart of Afghanistan, and its junction with the Indian railway system at Kandahar. General Annenkoff has both in print and in reported interviews indulged in the most rainbow-hued anticipations of such an amalgamation. He has talked about Englishmen travelling from London to India in nine days *viâ* the Caspian and Herat; and,

though he seems to have been struck by the improbability that such a line passing through Russian territory could be utilised by British troops, he has expressed the ingenuous opinion that it might certainly be used by British merchants, while an exemption might even be made in favour of British officers. The physical obstacles to such a through line are *nil*. I have pointed out that the extension to Herat is easy, and is only a matter of time. From Herat to Kandahar, a distance of 389 miles, there are no greater difficulties. As long ago as June 25, 1838, Sir John M'Neill, who showed a knowledge much in advance of his generation, wrote as follows to Lord Palmerston from Meshed:—

> I have already informed your lordship publicly that the country between the frontiers of Persia and India is far more productive than I had imagined it to be; and I can assure your lordship that there is no impediment, either from the physical features of the country or from the deficiency of supplies, to the march of a large army from the frontiers of Georgia to Kandahar, or, as I believe, to the Indus.
>
> Count Simonitch, being lame from a wound, drove his carriage from Teheran to Herat, and could drive it to Kandahar; and the Shah's army has now for nearly seven months subsisted almost exclusively on the supplies of the country immediately around Herat and Ghurian, leaving the still more productive districts of Sebzewar and Farrah untouched. In short, I can vouch from personal observation that there is absolutely no impediment to the march of an army to Herat; and that from all the information I have received, the country between that city and Kandahar not only presents no difficulty, but affords remarkable facilities for the passage of armies. There is, therefore, my lord, no security for India in the nature of the country through which an army would have to pass to

invade it from this side.) On the contrary, the whole line is peculiarly favourable for such an enterprise; and I am the more anxious to state this opinion clearly, because it is at variance with my previous belief, and with statements which I may have previously hazarded, relying on more imperfect information.

What M'Neill said fifty years ago of an army applies still more to-day to a railway. At Kandahar the line would be separated by only sixty miles of level plain from the present outpost of British arms and terminus of the Quetta Railway at Chaman. From 600 to 700 miles, for the most part over a country as flat as the palm of the hand, is therefore the very limited extent of the hiatus that still intervenes.

Grave drawbacks

When we turn to the political aspect of the question we are in a very different atmosphere. After all, the proposed amalgamation must involve two consenting parties; and if the Russian Government were to favour the idea, which is so contrary to traditional Muscovite policy as to be extremely unlikely, the consent of Downing Street, of the British House of Commons, and, in the last resort, of the British people, would still have to be obtained. I devoutly hope that not one of the three would for a moment entertain an idea so speculative in its inception, so problematical in its issues, so perilous in the lateral contingencies to which it might give birth. I question if even from a fiscal point of view England would reap the slightest advantage from the alleged new outlet to her Indian trade; for this would speedily be stifled by the merciless prohibitory tariffs of Russia,

i. Fiscal

which already have all but ousted English caravan-borne goods from the markets of Central Asia, and have seriously handicapped the export of Indian native produce and manufactures. On the other hand, Russian merchandise, unimpeded by hostile duties, would descend in an avalanche upon the markets of Afghanistan, Beluchistan, and the Indian border; it would flood the towns of Seistan and Southern Persia; and England would find that she had stupidly handed over the keys of her commercial monopoly to her only formidable rival.

ii. Political

But supposing these views to be exaggerated or mistaken, assuming commercial profit to Great Britain resulting from a junction of railways, and estimating that profit at the maximum, it would yet be dearly purchased at the cost of national insecurity, of lowered prestige, and of perpetual danger. The prolongation of the Russian railway through Afghanistan—for if it were prolonged it is to be feared that as far as Kandahar it would be the work of Russian capital and of Russian hands—would be regarded throughout the East as a crowning blow to British prestige, already seriously imperilled by a long course of pocketed affronts and diplomatic reverses. It would imply the consolidation of Russian dominion right up to the gates of Kandahar (for I am assuming that in the event of Russia seizing Herat the British Government would at least retaliate by an occupation of Kandahar). It would entail a coterminous frontier. It would bring a possible enemy a month nearer to the Indus and to India. It would mean that at the

slightest breath of disagreement between the Cabinets of London and St. Petersburg, the British frontier must be placed in a state of efficient defence against armed attack. It would involve an enormous concentration of troops, and a heavy charge upon the Indian Exchequer. It would necessitate a standing increase of the Indian Army. For all these reasons I earnestly hope that no support will be given in England to a project so fantastic in itself and likely to be so dangerous to the Empire.

Favourable estimate of the Transcaspian Railway

Passing from the question of the future development of the Transcaspian line, I will briefly state what appeared to me to be its chief sources of strength and means of influence, and will then attempt to estimate its bearing upon the relations of Great Britain and Russia in the East. In the first place, I am inclined to think that General Annenkoff's railway has been much underrated in England. Realistic descriptions of the unprepossessing country which it traverses, exaggerated versions of the various accidents or stoppages to traffic that have occurred, an imperfect comprehension of the as yet undeveloped resources of the new Russian territories, have combined to produce an unfavourable impression. It was even believed for some time in this country that the line was laid on a very narrow gauge; and Sir Charles Dilke, writing so late as the year 1887, described the extension south of Askabad, which had been completed for over a year, as a steam tramway, a statement which is still allowed to appear without correction in the printed collection of his essays.

From the evidence of my own eyes, of which I have endeavoured to give a perfectly faithful picture, I drew a different conclusion. It appeared to me that, on the whole, and taking into account the poverty of available resources, the line has been well and substantially laid; that the rolling stock, though at present inadequate, is of good material; that the buildings and appointments have been or are being excellently constructed; that the permanent way has been as effectively safeguarded against destructive influences as the local conditions will permit; and that, considering the limited amount of traffic that for some time will pass over the line, compared with railways in European States, and the avowedly strategical character of the original undertaking, it is of a more solid and permanent character than might have been expected. Attention was drawn by the 'Times' correspondent to the absence of a sufficient number of culverts to draw off the cataracts of water that descend from the Persian mountains, a defect which has since been repaired, and I have before alluded to the ever-present peril of the sands. With these two exceptions, the line is as safe and as durable a one as is to be found in any similar region of the world.

Possible strain in time of war

To what extent it might, in time of war, be able to stand the strain of a succession of heavy trains, is perhaps more open to question. The absence of any ballast but sand, and the difficulty, in the absence of timber, of repairing rotten or broken sleepers, though not noticeable under the conditions of ordinary traffic,

might become serious in an emergency. The scarcity of water and the amount of railway material required for the conveyance of supplies, co-operating with the above-mentioned features, incline me to the belief that, of the two extremes, a lower rather than a higher estimate should at present prevail of its capabilities—formidable as I shall show these in many respects to be—in time of war.

Political effects of the railway

Among the consequences directly accruing from the construction of the railway, I will first call attention to its political effects on Russia and the Russian dominions in the East. Twenty-five years ago, when Russia, recovering from the prostration inflicted by the Crimean War, began to push into the heart of Asia, it was from the north and north-west that she advanced. Her objective was the Khanates of the middle zone, towards which her route lay over the Kirghiz Steppes; and she attained her end with the capture of Samarkand and practical subjugation of Bokhara in 1868. Turkestan and Khokand were already conquered, if not finally absorbed; and north of the Oxus no fresh enemy awaited or merited attack. Accordingly she shifted her attention to another quarter, and commenced, at first tentatively and blunderingly, from the direction of the Caspian Sea. Ambition, nature, necessity gradually tempted her on, from Krasnovodsk to Geok Tepe, from Geok Tepe to Askabad, from Askabad to Merv, and from Merv to Sarakhs and Penjdeh, until presently she found herself in possession of a twofold Asiatic dominion, the one part in Turkomania, the other in

Turkestan. A mighty river and impassable sands separated the two and rendered communication precarious. General Annenkoff's railway has laughed alike at river and at sands, has passed the impassable, and has linked together and consolidated the earlier and the later conquest, welding east and west into a single Central Asian Empire. Bokhara, it is true, lies sandwiched between; but so does Hyderabad between the presidencies of Madras and Bombay. Panic-stricken before, Bokhara is impotent now, having signed away her last expiring chance of freedom when the first rails started from the Oxus bank. It is amazing to hear and read of people who still argue as though Bokhara might rise in rebellion, and the Russians be forcibly ejected from the Khanate. Let all such insane hallucinations be extinguished. The sentence that Geok Tepe wrote in blood for the Turkomans, General Annenkoff has translated in a less truculent vocabulary for the Tajiks. Bokhara is rather more Russian than Hyderabad is British; and the Amir is, if possible, less formidable than the Nizam.

Absorption of Turkomania

In Turkomania, too, the railway has exercised a powerful effect. Without it the occupation of Merv, though peacefully effected, would have remained a venture, isolated, and possibly followed by risk. Merv on the railway line has taken its place as one link in the chain of Turkoman oases, now for the first time connected together, and has pledged along with its own allegiance that of Yuletan, Sarakhs, and Penjdeh. Indeed, the ultimate consequences of the line are further reaching still; for to a new Turko-

manian empire thus constituted the whole body of Turkomans, whose tribal differences are as nothing compared with their blood distinction from Persian, Afghan, or Tartar, will tend to gravitate; and the Turkomans of North Persia, Yomuds and Goklans of the Atrek, Gurgan, and Sumbar Rivers, as well as the Turkomans—Salors, Ersari, Alieli, Kara, and others—of the upper pastures of the Kushk and Murghab, of Andkui and Maimena, and Afghan Turkestan, along with those of Khiva,[1] will sooner or later cross the frontier line into Russian territory if she does not first cross it into theirs. In a word, the construction of the railway means the final Russification of the whole Turkoman Steppes from Khorasan to Khiva, and from the Caspian to the Oxus.

Influence upon Persia

Of the influence of the railway upon Persia I shall speak again in discussing its commercial and military consequences. But the political ascendency which it confirms to Russia may be roughly indicated by a glance at the map, where it will be seen to command along its entire length the northern flank of Khorasan, and has been signally exemplified in the pressure lately brought to bear by Russia with such complete success at Teheran, first to secure the appointment of a Consul-General at Meshed, and subsequently to enforce the completion of the road to that place from Askabad. The Russian minister at Teheran has but to wink his eye in the direction of the Caspian and

[1] The Turkomans under Khivan rule are Yomuds, Chadars, Emrali Ata and Alili; and their numbers were estimated by Kaufmann and Petrusevitch at 250,000.

Khorasan for the Shah to know exactly what is meant. The Transcaspian Railway is a sword of Damocles perpetually suspended above his head, just as the non-payment of the war indemnity is over that of his companion in misfortune, the Sultan of Turkey.

Increased prestige of Russia

Among the political consequences of the railway must be included the immense augmentation of Russian prestige in the East. Already redoubtable for the endurance and bravery of her soldiers, she has shown her superiority over those hostile forces of nature with which the fatalistic Oriental has never found spirit to cope. A railway in the deserts of Central Asia is a far more wonderful thing to the Eastern mind than one through the teeming territories of Hindostan: the passage of the sands more remarkable than the piercing of mountain ranges. Fatalism, moreover, if it starts by provoking a sanguinary resistance, ends in producing a stupefied submission. A sense of utter powerlessness against the Russians has been diffused abroad among the Central Asian peoples, and experience of the overwhelming strength of their conquerors has brought a corresponding recognition of their own weakness to the conquered. The fire of inveterate savagery burns feebly and low. Like a herd of cattle cowering under shelter during a thunderstorm, they court the very danger by which they are at once fascinated and appalled.

Commercial effects

I turn next to the commercial effects of the new railway, a subject upon which I shall express decided opinions, and opinions at variance with those that have hitherto found spokesmen in this country. It

has been asserted that little or no commercial interest has been displayed in the undertaking; that no merchants from St. Petersburg or Moscow were present at the inauguration; that the annual fair at Baku, established in connection with the line, has so far proved somewhat of a failure (it has, however, only been in existence for two years); and, in fine, that the business classes in Russia have as good as boycotted the entire concern. I believe this to be an altogether erroneous impression. I look upon the railway as possessing a commercial future of the very first and most serious importance; and I can even conceive this result, that an enterprise admittedly military in its inception may come in time to be regarded by Great Britain as a more formidable antagonist to her mercantile than to her imperial supremacy in the East.

Annenkoff's prophecies

In credit to General Annenkoff it must be said that, partly no doubt with a desire to conciliate opposition and to render plausible the pacific character of the undertaking, but still with no small practical insight, he has proclaimed from the first that there was a great trade opening in Central Asia which his railway was destined to fill. In his original pamphlet, introducing his scheme to the notice of the public, he pointed out that the overland trade of India had invariably enriched the countries through which it passed. He proposed, in short, to tap the springs of Central Asian commerce, and to compete with Great Britain even in the markets of her own dominions. In a later report, published at St. Petersburg in 1887,

upon the commercial importance of the line, the General wisely restricted his imagination to a somewhat less ambitious horizon, but with actual experience to reckon from, issued a revised manifesto of the commercial possibilities of Russia in Central Asia.[1] In this publication he pointed out the chance now presented to Russia of securing a monopoly of the trade of Khorasan, and estimated that four-fifths of the exports, amounting to 6,450 tons weight, would pass by the Transcaspian Railway, and of the imports and exports together 12,100 tons. He also dwelt upon the future of the cotton industry of Turkestan, destined sooner or later to meet the fullest demands of European Russia, whither the Transcaspian Railway would provide the speediest and cheapest method of transport, Turkestan-grown cotton being saleable under these conditions in Moscow at fourpence a pound, whereas imported cotton from Egypt, India, or America is only procurable at an average price of sevenpence a pound. The calculations and forecasts of General Annenkoff are, I believe, broadly speaking, correct, and are corroborated by my own inquiries on the spot, by the accounts of experts, and by the results so far exhibited by the Transcaspian Railway returns.

Commercial policy and success of Russia

In this relation the Russians have acted with commendable judgment from the start. Before the line was pushed on to the Oxus and Bokhara, a commission was appointed to report upon the prin-

[1] Vide No. 71 of the Miscellaneous Series of Foreign Office Reports, 1887.

cipal lines of communication and trade arteries, and to specify the points whither to attract and where to repel commercial intercourse. In accordance with its recommendations, the line was designed to correspond with the principal caravan routes and waterways. In 1884 the telegraph wire was extended to Bokhara, so as to enable the merchants of that great emporium to be in touch with the fluctuations of the European market and *vice versâ*. How rapid and how complete has been the mercantile conquest which Russia has subsequently achieved in the Tartar capital my remarks in an earlier chapter have shown. At the present moment she may be said to have absolute command, so far as European imports are concerned, of the Bokharan market; and a few years ago the 'Turkestan Gazette' boasted of having destroyed foreign—*i.e.* English—trade to the value of 750,000*l.* with Bokhara alone. In Turkestan the old caravan route *viâ* Kazalinsk and Orenburg, which occupied from sixty to a hundred and twenty days, has been partially deserted in favour of the longer but more expeditious journey by the railway.

Russian economic policy of strict protection

Simultaneously with these results must be noticed the fiscal policy deliberately pursued by Russia throughout her dominions, and nowhere with less compunction or quarter than in Central Asia. In August 1887, the Russian Minister of Finance, paying an official visit to the Great Fair at Nijni Novgorod, addressed to the assembled merchants this remarkable message from the Czar:—

> The Emperor has ordered me to tell the merchants and manufacturers here assembled that the successes of Russian trade and industry are always dear to his heart, and that he considers those successes as the most important functions of the life of the State; and that he will regard every service rendered for the furtherance of Russian trade and industry as a meritorious act accomplished for the good of the State. . . . All the measures latterly adopted for stimulating Russian trade and industry were conceived and ordered to be carried out by the Emperor. He directs, and will continue to direct, the economic and financial policy of the country, and all benign initiative proceeds immediately from him.[1]

Here was a direct proclamation of the principle of a national economic policy, and the arrogation of an Imperial authority for the rigid protective system that is now being unflinchingly applied from the Baltic to the China Seas.

Its operation in Central Asia

In Central Asia this policy has been pursued with deadly consequences to all other competitors, and most of all to the sole serious competitor with Russia—Great Britain. In 1881 all European—*i.e.* in the main British—products were, with a few specified exceptions, absolutely excluded from the Russian possessions in Central Asia. At the same time heavy duties were imposed upon Indian products, such as tissues, indigo, and teas, a tariff which in 1886 produced 25,000*l.* upon the Indian goods imported through Afghanistan.[2] In Russian territory special

[1] Vide No. 68 of the Miscellaneous Series of Foreign Office Reports, 1889.

[2] The customs regulations for the present year in Russian Turkestan were promulgated as follows in the *Turkestan Gazette* of May 1889:—

I. All imports from other parts of the Russian Empire, and all

encouragement is given to Russian importation, while exemptions are granted to neighbouring native states. The fiscal policy of Russia may be described, therefore, as prohibitory towards Great Britain, as restrictive towards India, as differential towards other Eastern countries, and as protective towards herself.

Russian trade with Afghanistan

In Afghanistan this policy is producing results of a twofold and marked significance. It is expanding

merchandise and products from Bokhara, Khiva, and China, are admitted free of customs duties into Russian Turkestan, with the exceptions mentioned in III.

II. The importation of Anglo-Indian, Afghan, Persian, Turkish, and Western European goods not enumerated in III., and also of powder and warlike stores, is forbidden.

III. The following articles may only be imported on payment of duty as set forth:—

(1) Precious stones, real and imitation, pearls, garnets, and unworked coral at 4 *roubles* 8 *kopecks per poud.*

(2) Laurel leaves and berries at 2 r. 21 k. *per poud.*

(3) Spices at duties varying between 5 r. and 24 r. *per poud.*

(4) Sugar products, mainly confectionery and preserves, at 1 r. 65 k. *per poud.*

(5) Tea at 14 r. 40 k. *per poud.*

(6) Indigo at 6 r. *per poud.*

(7) Boots and shoes of Indian leather at 1 r. 19 k. *per lb.*

(8) Muslin at 1 r. *per lb.*

(9) Coral, worked and threaded, at 6 r. 72 k. *per lb.*

Early in the same year a decree was published for the establishment of a special customs service in Transcaspia (vide the *Kavkas* newspaper, March 29, 1889), which contained these, among other, provisions:—

I. European, Anglo-Indian, and Persian goods, brought by land from abroad into the Transcaspian province are subjected to an *ad valorem* duty of $2\frac{1}{2}$ *per cent.*

II. Goods passing through the custom house at Uzun Ada for European Russia or the Caucasus are to pay the full European tariff, deducting the amount already paid under I.

Since then, however, an official proclamation has been issued at Askabad, declaring that all goods from Persia will be allowed free transit through Transcaspia if sent *viâ* Uzun Ada and Baku; a privilege which had previously been conceded to Persian trade passing through the Caucasus. (*Board of Trade Journal*, June 1889.)

with great rapidity the interchange of commercial relations between the markets of Northern Afghanistan and the neighbouring Russian or Russianised provinces, particularly Bokhara; thus providing Russia with a new outlet for her manufactures at the same time that she is politically the gainer by the establishment of friendly relations with the Afghans. In the second place, it is crushing British Indian commercial competition in Afghanistan, not merely in the North, but even as far South as Kabul, and is ousting English trade from one more field of hitherto undisputed triumph. A few words about each of these results.

Imports and exports

The trade between Afghanistan and Bokhara is caravan-borne, and is principally in the hands of Bokharan merchants; though a case has been heard of a Russian merchant proceeding to Charvilayet, and successfully trading there in Russian sugar. The Afghan markets immediately served by the caravans are those of Maimena, Andkui, Shibergan, Akcha, and Siripul; and the chief imports from Afghanistan, exclusive of the Indian transit trade, which consists of green tea, indigo, drugs, and English muslin, brought *vid* Kabul, are wool, sheep, lamb, and fox-skins, oil seed, and pistachio nuts. The main Russian exports to Afghanistan are printed goods, sugar, lump, moist, and candy, trunks, iron, hardware, copper, drugs, and matches. The Russian Journal of the Ministry of Finance for 1889 has published the following figures of this Russo-Afghan trade for the past year, during which time it suffered seriously from the

general disturbance arising out of the rebellion of Is-hak Khan.

Import of Goods to Bokhara from Afghanistan.

June 1888 (before the rebellion)	£215,390
July	80,720
August	55,414
September	45,924
October	38,611
November	43,812
December	3,511

Export of Russian Goods to Afghanistan from Bokhara.

June 1888 (before the rebellion)	£123,581
July	54,558
August	53,241
September	33,669
October / November	55,364
December	5,417

The above figures indicate both the high level of business transactions between Russia and Afghanistan that has already been reached in time of peace, and the complete dislocation arising from warlike proceedings. In the settlement that has since ensued, the rebound will probably be as rapid; although the exorbitant transit dues charged by the Afghans, which have had the effect, as stated in a previous chapter, of diverting some of the trade to the ridiculously circuitous route from the Persian Gulf to Askabad, will for a time exercise a restrictive influence. Nevertheless the official report does not hesitate to conclude that, 'notwithstanding recent political complications, Northern Afghanistan presents a market in which Russian goods find a ready sale, and compete success-

fully with Anglo-Indian and other European merchandise.'

Anglo-Indian transit trade

It is in the latter respect that the apprehensions of Englishmen will find most cause for legitimate provocation. Afghanistan has long and naturally been regarded as the private preserve of English traders, who, in the absence of competition from the North, distributed their goods throughout the country by means of native caravans, penetrating the main passes from British India. Some of these goods merely passed through the country on their way to the now Russianised markets of Central Asia; a trade which, though it still exists in the case of such products or manufactures as Russia cannot herself provide, is crippled by the double deadweight of Afghan and Russian prohibitory tariffs, and is brought to an absolute standstill in winter or in times of political disturbance. Its decline may be illustrated by returns showing that the transit trade *vid* Herat and Kerki to Bokhara, which in 1881 amounted to 3,600 camel loads and 1,025 tons weight, sank in 1884 to 1,700 camel loads and 490 tons weight, and has since all but vanished; while during the autumn and winter of last year (1888) communication by caravan between Kabul and Bokhara ceased altogether.

British trade with Afghanistan

But the diminution, or even the extinction, of this transit trade is less significant than the progressive expulsion of British and Indian manufactures from the markets of Afghanistan itself. The statistics of exports from the Punjab into Afghanistan exhibit a steady decline; Kabul and Herat no longer look to

India alone for their foreign or European supplies; and the latest official report of the Indian Government contains these words:—

The trade with parts beyond Quetta is as yet not large, and perhaps it can hardly be expected to become so until Kandahar is reached. Trade with Kabul is not progressing as it might have been expected to do, seeing that the railway runs right up to its border, and that the country has been free for the last few years from serious political convulsions. Whether the stagnation of the trade is to be attributed to Russian customs restrictions on the border of Northern Afghanistan, impeding the progress of transit trade between India and Central Asia, or to the illiberal fiscal *régime* of the Amir, or to tribal disturbances from time to time, it is certain in any case that the trade gives no indication of material increase. The sale of Russian goods is stated in a Consular report to be yearly increasing in Persia and in the neighbouring Afghan territory, from which British goods are being driven out.[1]

Quotation from Foreign Office Report

The general commercial outlook in Central Asia is therefore as good for Russia as it is discouraging for Great Britain. Similar testimony may be cited from other quarters. The report of Russian trade for the year 1887 contained this paragraph:—

Traders from Khiva, Bokhara, Tashkent, Persia, and even Asia Minor, are said to have made considerable purchases of Russian cotton goods at the Fair of Nijni Novgorod in 1887, instead of, as formerly, supplying themselves with English productions, which they obtained through Batoum, Asia Minor, and Persia. The closing of Batoum as a free port, the abolition of the transit trade across the Caucasus, and the construction of the Transcaspian Railway have undeniably resulted in the acquisition of new markets for Russian manu-

[1] *Statement of the Trade of British India from* 1883–88. London, 1889.

facturers in the far East, to our clear disadvantage. According to the report of the Governor of the Transcaspian region, the sale of Russian goods is not only yearly increasing in Persia (especially at Kuchan, Bujnurd, and Meshed), but is driving British goods out of the neighbouring Afghan territory, as, for instance, out of Herat. Bokhara is reported to be replete with the products of Russian manufacture. The Russian diplomatic agent there states that English goods are not able to compete with Russian products, and that English prints are rarely to be met with at present in Bokhara. Native dealers of the Caucasus, Trans-Caucasus, and Turkish Armenia are reported to have also become large purchasers of Russian manufactured goods. Great Britain, which formerly enjoyed almost the monopoly of the trade in most of these parts, is now receding there, commercially, into the background. The Governor-General of Turkestan confirms the report of his colleague of the Transcaspian region as to the increasing demand for Russian goods in Central Asia.[1]

Of this import and export trade the Transcaspian Railway is fast acquiring the entire monopoly, conveying to the Caspian, and so to Europe, the cotton, the raw and dyed silk, the silk and cotton tissues, the velvets, sheepskins, carpets, leather, dried fruits, goats' hair, camels' hair, and furs of the East; and flooding the Oriental markets in return with the prints, muslins, calicoes, broadcloth and brocades, the hides, iron tools and implements, cutlery, chinaware, glass, jewellery, candles, and lamps of European Russia.[2]

If we turn from the eastern to the western region of influence—*i.e.* from Turkestan and Bokhara to

[1] No. 447 of the Annual Series of Foreign Office Reports, 1889.

[2] The value of Russian exports over her entire Asiatic frontier, which in 1884 was 2,470,000*l.*, rose in 1886 to 3,530,000*l.*; the value of imports from Asia rose in the same period from 3,620,000*l.* to 4,530,000*l.* (Vide *Board of Trade Journal*, p. 505, 1887.)

Khorasan and North Persia—the results are not less significant, or, from an English point of view, unsatisfactory. I have already pointed out the enormous advantage which the completion of the railway gives to Russia in the practical control of Khorasan. This province, perhaps the wealthiest and most fertile in Persia, is approached by three main caravan routes: (1) the Azerbaijan route *viâ* Tabriz, Teheran, and Shahrud; (2) the Bender Abbas or Bushire routes from the Persian Gulf; and (3) the Astrabad or Shahrud routes from the Caspian. For Southern and Central Persia, and even for Southern Khorasan, the roads from the Persian Gulf will retain their hold, especially for such imports as Indian teas; but for the towns of Bujnurd, Kuchan, Dereguez, Kelat, and Meshed, the two northern routes are already being superseded by the new Russian road, in connection with the railway, over the Kopet Dagh from Askabad. The latest Foreign Office Report says:—

Russian monopoly in Northern Persia and Khorasan

> East of Teheran, towards Meshed, and in Mazenderan, English prints are beaten by Russian productions, and in Mazenderan it would even be difficult to find a piece of English origin. . . . It is useless to attempt to compete with Russian sugar in North Persia. . . . In general hardware and cutlery Russia appears to be taking the lead with cutlery and plated goods from Warsaw, although the expense of carriage is greater than that from Sheffield. . . . North of Ispahan the crockery and glassware are almost exclusively supplied by Russia and Austria.[1]

Simultaneously the British Consul at Constanti-

[1] No. 119 of the Miscellaneous Series of Foreign Office Reports, 1889.

nople, in his report for the years 1887 and 1888 on the trade of that place, speaks as follows:—

> Large wholesale import houses in Constantinople, which formerly did business with Persia and Central Asia, and acted as middlemen between European manufacturers and the merchants of those parts, have in recent years lost their customers and are gradually disappearing. This is owing in a measure to new and more direct routes having been thrown open to markets that were formerly supplied from Constantinople. . . . In Persia, the provinces of Azerbaijan, Khoi, and Mazanderan alone continue to take their supplies by way of Constantinople, and then only when the Russian competition permits of their doing so. . . . Trade with Persia *viâ* Constantinople during the years 1887 and 1888 was not satisfactory. Dealers in Manchester goods suffered considerably, owing partly to Russian competition and also to the high rate of exchange prevailing at Odessa.[1]

Kindred testimony is borne by the French Consul at Tabriz, who in a letter to the *Moniteur Officiel du Commerce*, in July 1888, attributed the increase of trade between Persia and Russia to three causes—(1) the proximity of Russia and facility of transport to good markets, (2) the large consumption of Persian produce in the neighbouring Russian territory, and (3) the institution of the fair at Baku, which has already had an immense influence on Persian trade. He added, 'It seems likely that the trade of Europe with Persia will be very seriously affected indeed by the influences which are linking that country in a closer commercial union with Russia. But it is England which will suffer most by the new situation; for

[1] No. 537 of the Annual Series of Foreign Office Reports, 1889.

Russia makes muslins of better quality than those of Manchester; and when the price of the Russian muslins, which is rather high at present in consequence of their novelty, begins to fall a little, the English manufacturers will have no chance of competing with those of Russia.'

In other words, British manufactures and products are being rapidly exterminated from a field in which they once held undisputed sway; and, while Great Britain looks on with stolid surprise and British merchants offer the other cheek to the smiter, Russian commercial control is assuredly paving the way to ultimate political amalgamation.[1]

Destruction of British trade with Northern Persia

And yet we have already had sufficient warning a little further west, in the case of the overland trade with North and North-west Persia. The abolition of the transit trade across the Caucasus in 1883, and the closing of Batoum as a free port in 1886, destroyed an important branch of British trade both with Transcaucasia and with Persia, that formerly either crossed to Baku and the Caspian or entered Persia *vid* Poti or Batoum, Ardahan, Kars, and Erivan to Tabriz, to the value of nearly 1,000,000*l.* a year. If it be contended that this trade was merely diverted to the longer and more costly Trebizond route, the returns of British imports into Persia by the latter can be quoted as affording a conclusive demonstration of the positive

[1] I have discussed at greater length and with additional evidence the commercial rivalry between Russia and England in Central Asia in a paper read before the British Association at Newcastle in September, 1889, and published in the Asiatic *Quarterly Review* for October.

loss incurred. For, so far from the Trebizond figures showing an increase, as they might be expected to do, in consequence of the closing of the Batoum line, they exhibit a steady annual reduction during the last three recorded years:—

1880	1881	1882	1883	1884	1885	1886	1887
£548,921	527,462	679,428	652,823	704,493	578,850	522,480	471,700

while the report of the trade of Trebizond for the year 1887 contains the accompanying admission that 'the decrease in cotton goods, especially from the United Kingdom, is to be explained by the greater importation of Russian stuffs, which appears to be yearly on the increase, that of Trebizond alone figuring for 1887 as 10,000*l.*, against 1,920*l.* in 1886.'[1]

Commercial future of the Transcaspian Railway

From all this evidence it results that in the policy of excluding Great Britain from the markets of Persia, as from those of Central Asia, Russia, whose motto is 'War to the Knife,' is attaining a marked success; and that to this success the Transcaspian Railway is contributing in no slight degree. Russian eyes are open, even if British eyes are shut, to this consummation; and there are those in Russia who see clearly enough the great commercial future that, with proper management, may await the Transcaspian line. In 1886, M. Palashkofski, builder of the Caucasian Railway, proposed the formation of a company in order to buy the line as far as the Oxus, on condition of a Crown guarantee of four-and-a-half per cent. interest on the shares to be issued, and a

[1] No. 342 of the Annual Series of Foreign Office Reports, 1888.

yearly subsidy from the Government for military transport. Though the capital subscribed would have been acceptable to the Russian Government, the proposal was not entertained, being in direct conflict with the present imperial policy. Quite lately, however, rumours have been heard of a great mercantile combination which is to embrace Eastern Europe and the whole of Central Asia, including Persia and Afghanistan, with the Transcaspian Railway as its pivot. Simultaneously, it is announced that the increasing need for banking accommodation in Central Asia is to be met either by the foundation of a new Caspian Bank, with branches in each of the leading Asiatic cities, or by extending the operations of already existing institutions, such as the Imperial Russian Bank, or the Caucasus and Mercury Trading Company. These vague reports, which illustrate a growing confidence in the enterprise, tend also to attach credit to the statement, recently circulated, that General Annenkoff's line is already beginning to defray its working expenses, and that whispers of a surplus have actually been heard.[1]

Finally, I pass to the strategical consequences of

[1] The *Pall Mall Gazette*, in June 1889, published the report of an interview with General Annenkoff, in which he declared that in 1888 the Transcaspian Railway yielded a net profit of 50,000*l.*; gross receipts having been 240,000*l.*, expenses 190,000*l.*; and that in 1889 3 per cent. would be paid to the shareholders. As there are no shareholders but the Government, we must attribute the latter remark to the faulty comprehension of the interviewer. From later information we learn that between January 1 and June 1, 1889, there were conveyed by the Transcaspian Railway 49,410 tons of goods, including 14,762 tons of Asiatic cotton, 11,568 tons of cereals, 6,379 tons of sugar, 334 tons of linen, 39 tons of silk, and 817 tons of manufactured articles.

Strategical consequences of the line

the Transcaspian Railway, in discussing which I speak with the deference incumbent upon a civilian, though I do not approach the subject without consultation with others amply qualified on military grounds to pronounce an opinion.

Shifting of centre of gravity in Central Asia

In this context the first and most patent consequence of the railway is that entire shifting of the centre of gravity in Central Asia to which I have more than once called attention in previous chapters, the supersession of Turkestan by Transcaspia, the dethronement of Tashkent by Askabad. For the first fifteen years of Russian dominion in Central Asia, Tashkent was the pivot round which all revolved, the military and administrative capital, the cradle of policy, the starting-point of action. Kaufmann and Tchernaieff were successively the arbiters of the East, and in their authority and independence resembled an ancient satrap rather than a modern viceroy. When in the summer of 1878, just before the signature of the Treaty of Berlin, it was thought desirable by Russia to make a hostile demonstration against Great Britain in the East, a fact which no student of the Central Asian question should ever lose sight of in his diagnosis of the situation, it was from Tashkent that an expedition of 20,000 men was equipped and led by Kaufmann himself *viâ* Samarkand to Jam, on the Bokharan frontier, in order to menace, and, if necessary, to invade, Afghanistan. It was from Tashkent that the Pamir column, under General Abramoff, started through Ferghana and the Alai to operate in the

direction of Kashmir. It was from Tashkent that the Stolietoff Mission was simultaneously despatched across the Oxus and the Hindu Kush to Kabul. No other line of attack upon India was then either possible or conceivable; for on the other or western side the Russians were as yet only precariously established at Krasnovodsk and Tchikishliar on the eastern shores of the Caspian, and 600 miles of hostile wilderness separated them from the north-west outposts of Afghanistan. In twenty years, however, there has been a wonderful change. With the successes of Skobeleff, Transcaspia threw down her first challenge to Turkestan. Geok Tepe, Askabad, Sarakhs, Merv, and Penjdeh marked the successive stages of the friendly rivalry. Every league of advance towards Afghanistan was a new point to the gain of Askabad, to the loss of Tashkent. The former had a boundless horizon of activity; the latter was forced to sit still. General Annenkoff's railway has now put the coping-stone upon the edifice; and the Russian Governor-Generalship of Transcaspia, whether dependent or independent, emerges a solid and substantial structure, commanding the nearest approach, and congratulating itself upon the inheritance of the keys to the Indian Empire of the British Crown. Established at Askabad, at Sarakhs, and at Merv, with frontier outposts at Pul-i-Khatun and Penjdeh, with a railway station only ninety miles from Sarakhs, which itself is only 170 miles from Herat, Russia has acquired and has fortified a new line of advance, and

has planted her foot on the path which every Indian conqueror has trod from Alexander to Nadir Shah.

Greater proximity of base

But the significance of the situation consists not so much in what lies in front of her present or future outposts as in what lies behind. Hitherto a hostile movement against India has involved the operation of an advanced army severed from its base by vast distances, by rivers of great width, and by mountain barriers of enormous height. Had Kaufmann marched upon India through Afghanistan in 1878, he would have had first to cross the Oxus, and then to climb the Hindu Kush, and even so would only have found himself at Kabul with the passes of the Sufeid Koh and Suleiman ranges between him and the Indus; whilst his real base at Orenburg, the furthest point of the then existing railway system, would have been separated from him by two thousand miles and by months of time. Henceforward a similar design may find its execution from the opposite quarter, and can rest upon an unbroken line of connection by steam traffic with the heart of the empire and the arsenals of European Russia. At Sarakhs or at Takhta-Bazar the Russian commander is in communication by wire with Tiflis and St. Petersburg. He can summon to his aid the resources of the Caucasus from Baku, or of European Russia from the Volga; and transporting both or either from the eastern shore of the Caspian by a line of railway invulnerable to flank attack, can launch them against the fortifications of Herat or even meditate a sustained march to the Helmund.

Comparison of present with former facilities

Or let me illustrate the development in the present situation by a comparison with quite recent times. I have already shown the difficulties under which an invasion of Afghanistan from the north would have laboured, and would still labour, if considered apart by itself. Let us imagine, however, that Russia had, at any time during the last twenty years, contemplated such a move from the opposite or western quarter. How would she have been situated, and what would have been her chances as compared with those of England? I will take the two periods of 1878 and 1885, the dates respectively of the flight of Shir Ali from Kabul, and the affray on the Kushk, both of them occasions on which the possibility of hostilities presented itself very clearly to the Russian mind. Had the Russians contemplated an invasion of Afghanistan in the spring of 1879, their nearest forces at Krasnovodsk would have been separated by 700 miles from Herat, the intervening desert being occupied by savage and hostile tribes, flushed with recent victory over Lomakin's battalions. The British, in possession of Kandahar, were only 390 miles distant, an advantage to the British of 310 miles. As late even as 1883, before Merv had been annexed, and while the railway terminus was still at Kizil Arvat, the late Sir C. MacGregor, then Quartermaster-General in India, who displayed a surer insight into the military situation than any contemporary officer or statesman, wrote as follows:—

I am having two papers got ready—one to show how soon we could put 10,000 men into Herat, another how soon the

Russians could do the same. *We are about equal now, and we could beat them; but every day tells against us.*[1]

How true were these concluding words is shown by the contrast presented within less than two years. In April 1885, when the two countries trembled on the brink of war, the situation had positively been reversed. The nominal Russian outposts were now at Sarakhs, only 170 miles from Herat, while a Cossack force was actually in possession of Pul-i-Khatun, forty miles further to the south. In the meantime the British had increased instead of diminishing their distance, having retreated to Quetta, a distance of 500 miles from Herat, so that the balance of advantage had swung round to the opposite side. Finally, I contrast both these positions with that of the present year. At this moment the most advanced point of the Russian frontier, as settled by the Joint Commission, is at Chihil Dukhtaran, where is the 23rd boundary pillar, exactly fifty-five miles as the crow flies from Herat. The British have pushed forward a modest seventy miles from Quetta to Chaman, but are still 460 miles from Herat. These figures will prove more plainly than any number of words the prodigious change—I will go further, and say the absolute transformation—in the scene which the Transcaspian conquests of the Czar have brought about, and the seal upon which has been set by the completion of the new railway. It means that the power of menace, which the ability to take Herat involves, has passed from English to Russian hands; that the Russian

[1] *Life and Opinions of Sir C. MacGregor*, vol. ii. p. 316.

seizure of Herat is now a matter not so much of war as of time; and that the Russians will thus, without an effort, win the first hand in the great game that is destined to be played for the empire of the East.

Russian power of attack

These are the advantages as regards situation and opportunity which their Transcaspian conquests, and the railway as its sequel, have placed in the Russians' hands. I now propose to show to what extent they will be able to utilise them, and what are the counter-advantages or possibilities to be credited to Great Britain.

Lines of invasion

In the event of war being declared between England and Russia, and the latter deciding upon an invasion of Afghanistan, there would be open to her two main lines of advance—(1) *viâ* the Transcaspian Railway and Herat, (2) *viâ* Samarkand and Kilif, or *viâ* the Oxus and Kerki upon Afghan Turkestan, and ultimately upon Kabul. A third column might be expected to operate in the direction of the upper Oxus and the Pamir, endeavouring to effect a descent by lofty but available passes upon Chitral or Gilgit, and requiring a British counter-movement on the side of Kashmir. With the proceedings of this flank diversion, which might be troublesome but could not be really serious, I am not in this chapter concerned to deal. Our attention may for the moment be confined to the two former and principal lines of advance.

i. Caspian and Herat line

In June 1883, Sir C. MacGregor wrote the following letter to Major the Hon. G. C. Napier, than which no clearer illustration could be quoted of the character

of the problem, and the proper method to approach its solution. If I do not follow in detail its suggestions, it is because I am dealing with broad considerations of statesmanship rather than with the technical *minutiæ* of a military plan of campaign, and because upon the latter a layman is wholly unqualified to pronounce.

I should be obliged if you could write a paper, showing how soon the Russians could put a force of 20,000 men down at Herat. Work it out as though you had to put that number of men there, and show where you could get the troops from; where they would embark; how long they would take to get to the east coast (of the Caspian); how long to disembark; what route they would take (1) supposing Persia was openly on their side, (2) if she was passive, (3) if she was hostile; what supplies would they require; what baggage; what transport—they would have to take at least two heavy batteries with them; what would be the best means which could be devised for ensuring that we should receive very early and reliable information of what Russia was doing.[1]

Strength and location of the Russian forces in Transcaspia

The normal strength of the Russian forces in Transcaspia is about 14,000 men. This includes eleven or twelve infantry battalions, one brigade or two regiments of Cossacks, companies of which are scattered along the frontier, and four batteries of artillery with thirty guns. In the spring of this year, in anticipation of possible trouble upon the Afghan frontier, this total was reported to have been increased by several thousand men. The points at which the troops are chiefly concentrated are Kizil Arvat, Askabad, Geok Tepe, Sarakhs, Merv, and Amu Daria.

[1] *Life and Opinions*, vol. ii. p. 315.

Detachments are also distributed among the more advanced posts of Kaahka, Pul-i-Khatun, Takhta Bazar, and along the line of the Murghab at Meruchak, Sari Yazi, and Imam Baba.[1] But little delay would be experienced in placing these forces in the field, seeing that they are already almost upon a war footing. Garrison duty would, however, detain one-third if not one-half of the total number. To the available strength must be added the local militia, at present only three hundred strong, but capable, as I have before pointed out, of large and rapid extension.

Reinforcements from Europe

At this point the enormous utility of the Transcaspian Railway becomes apparent, as the first line of communication through the Caspian with the Caucasus and with Europe—*i.e.* with the armies of Tiflis, and of European Russia south of Moscow. The former has a nominal strength on a peace footing of 101,500, and a mobilised strength of 270,000 men, and would naturally be set in motion from Tiflis and Baku, or perhaps if the battalions called out were stationed on the north of the Caucasus Range, from Vladikavkas and Petrovsk. The European contingent would be deposited by rail on the Volga at Saratov and Tsaritsin, and would consist of such troops as could be spared from the army corps of Moscow, Kharkov, and Kazan. Carried in river steamers down to Astrakhan, they would be transshipped there for Uzun Ada. It is conceivable that a joint army of 150,000, or even of 200,000 men

[1] Vide the narrative of the Comte de Cholet, *Voyage en Turkestan*, pp. 106, 120, 181, 199.

might, in the event of no complications being apprehended on the western frontiers of Russia, be detached for Central Asian service from these two bases, and might, with no great delay, be placed upon the western shores of the Caspian.

Difficulty of Caspian marine transport

Here, however, the Russians would be confronted with their first difficulty, arising from the dearth of marine transport. The last ten years have witnessed an astonishing development of navigation on the Caspian, the petroleum industry of Baku in particular being responsible for an entire fleet of magnificent steamers, owned by private firms, and specially constructed for the carriage of oil. Nor has the Government been altogether idle; for in addition to the subsidised fleet of the Caucasus and Mercury Company, whose vessels were used for military transport in the Turkoman campaigns, and would again be serviceable, there is a small naval flotilla, consisting of gunboats, armed steamers, and steam barges, with a complement of less than 1,000 men. No call has arisen for the augmentation of this force, the Persians being prohibited by treaty from keeping any men-of-war, or building any forts, upon the Caspian, which is therefore very justly described as a Russian lake, whereupon no hostile attacks need be apprehended.

Lates' figures

The latest returns of the Caspian marine (September 1888) show that the Government possess 70 steamers of varying tonnage, and that 10 new iron steamboats were added in the past year. The total number of steamers in the merchant fleet of the Caspian at the same time was 790. Of sailing vessels there

is of course a much larger number (from 1,200–1,500). It has recently been proposed by a Nijni Novgorod firm to establish a naval dockyard at one of the principal ports. The above figures show that, as regards numbers, the Russians would be in no want of vessels. How far the latter would be suited to purposes of transport, and with what speed they could convey large bodies of troops to the opposite shore, is a matter of greater uncertainty. Anyhow naval transport must be reckoned upon as a certain difficulty at the start, and as a probable delay to aggressive movements.

Difficulty of landing-places

A second difficulty would arise from the inadequate and backward facilities for disembarkation upon the eastern shore. Uzun Ada in its present condition is quite unsuited for the speedy or continuous discharge of large bodies of troops, or unlading of animals and stores, affording a shallow anchorage at the best, besides being frequently frozen over in the winter. Krasnovodsk would be the best and obvious landing-place, but is not yet connected by rail with the main line.

Difficulty of supplies

The troops once landed upon the eastern shore, the railway would of course transport them to the front with as much rapidity as the amount of available rolling-stock and the stability of the line, points upon which I have already dwelt, would allow. At this juncture however would emerge, in all its seriousness, the third and main difficulty, occasioned by the lack of supplies, the scarcity of forage and fuel, and the insufficient provision of transport animals. How serious is this question of food alone, few probably who have

not had some experience of warfare can realise. The late Colonel Home in his 'Précis of Military Tactics' compared an army on the march with a very large city, and thus contrasted the two situations:—

> Each day a large city receives its daily supply of food. There is no stint nor stay for those who can purchase. Long custom and gradual improvements have opened up easy means of communication between the consumer and the producer. It is different with an army. An army is a city flung down suddenly in the country, each day moving, each day requiring fresh alterations in the arrangements by which food is conveyed from the producer to the consumer. Yet this portion of the art of war—one of the most, if not the most important—receives but scant notice.

Serious in Transcaspia

In a country like Transcaspia these difficulties would be abnormally severe. It would be too much to expect the Turkoman oases, which barely support their present meagre population, to provide sustenance in addition for several scores of thousand armed men with their baggage animals and camp following. In the campaign of 1880–81, Skobeleff was almost wholly dependent for his grain supplies upon Northern Persia. Many scores of pages in General Grodekoff's account of the war are devoted to the record of that officer's labours, on behalf of the victualling department, in Khorasan; and after Skobeleff's first reconnaissance, nearly five months were spent in collecting and concentrating supplies in Transcaspia before the forward move was made. After the fall of Geok Tepe and seizure of Askabad, it was the exhaustion of supplies, rather than pacific intentions, that prevented the

Russians from occupying in force the Atek oasis, and even pushing on as far as the Tejend.

Importance of Khorasan

In time of war grain would also be required in enormous quantities for the horses, mules, and camels; whilst of the latter, if any serious forward march were meditated either upon the Helmund or into Afghan Turkestan, at least 100,000 would be necessary, at the average rate in Central Asian warfare of one camel per man, or, in other words, as large a number as exists in the whole of Transcaspia. In the total absence of timber the fuel needed for cooking and other practical purposes would have to be imported. These considerations throw a light upon the immense importance which Russia attaches to the control of Khorasan, a country well-wooded, of abundant fertility and great natural resources. They explain her feverish eagerness to strengthen her hold in that quarter; and they suggest the conjecture that no forward move on a large scale will be attempted till that wealthy province is wholly in her hands. In any case, the paucity of local contributions renders it certain that an army advancing from the Caspian must be largely dependent for its supplies upon European Russia; and the conveyance of these by train to the front, and return of empty wagons, would both exhaust a good deal of the available rolling-stock, and by occupying the line, would retard the despatch of troops to the theatre of war.

Complicity of Persia

I do not include in the category of impediments to Russia's advance the likelihood of her communications being cut by a flank attack, or of the railroad

being torn up between the Caspian and Dushak, hopeful as some English writers appear to be of such a contingency. Flank attack from the north over the barren waste of the Kara Kum is a physical impossibility; over the Persian mountains from the south a practical impossibility. Were Persia hostile to Russia, connection with Teheran could easily be cut off at the narrow neck of land, only sixty miles broad, between Astrabad and Shahrud; whilst the Persian troops in Khorasan by themselves are not worth a row of ninepins. But Persia is not, and, when war breaks out, will not be hostile to Russia. On the contrary, Russia will not go to war unless she has assured herself, not merely of Persian neutrality, but of Persian connivance; and those who talk of a Persian alliance to co-operate with England in the defence of Khorasan, or in an attack upon Transcaspia, are doing the worst service they can to their country by beguiling her with the most phantasmagorical and hopeless of illusions.

Addition to offensive power of Russia

The considerations which I have named above, while they modify the alarm which might at first thought be excited by the position and strength of Russia in Transcaspia, and while they justify the belief that a larger army than 50,000 men could not without considerable delay be placed, or without vast preparation be maintained, upon the Russo-Afghan frontier from this side, do not substantially alter the central and all-important fact, viz. that a movement upon Herat, the Helmund, or Kandahar, which four years ago was almost an impossibility by this route, has,

since the completion of the Transcaspian Railway, become a measure of practicable strategy, and has thereby more than duplicated the offensive strength of Russia in Asia. When we include in our survey the forces of Turkestan, and remember that an independent though allied movement would simultaneously be in course of execution from that quarter, we shall better understand how tremendous that strength has now become.

ii. Strength and utility of Turkestan army

So far our attention has been confined to Transcaspia. Turning thence to Turkestan, we find that in that dominion there is a present force of some 30,000 men, of 5,000 horses, and of 60 guns, partly scattered over a wide extent, but the main and most available elements of which are stationed at Tashkent and Samarkand, with advanced detachments at Katta Kurgan on the Bokharan frontier, and at Kerki on the Oxus. Of this army, reinforced as it might be by a large contingent from the neighbouring military district of Omsk, at least 20,000, if not 30,000 men, might be forthcoming for active service, the reserves being called out for garrison duty in Turkestan. Nor would such a force operate alone; for, in face of the difficulty attending the transport and sustenance of very large bodies of men from the Caspian, other marching routes might be adopted by which the resources of European Russia might be transported to Samarkand and the Oxus, either by the Orenburg postal road to Tashkent, or by the waterway of the Oxus to Tcharjui. Duration of time must be postulated of the former route, uncertainty, arising from

the precarious river navigation, of the second; whilst in both cases the winter months would not be available as a season for advance, which could only be effected in the early spring or summer. Nevertheless the Turkestan army might by these means be doubled in numbers; while the force so congregated could either, if required, effect a junction with the Transcaspian column at Merv, or, as is much more probable, might be equipped to execute an independent attack upon Afghan Turkestan, descending upon the ferries of the Oxus at Kerki or Kilif and marching *viâ* Balkh and Tashkurgan upon Bamian, and the passes of the Hindu Kush that lead to Kabul. Difficulties of transport, supplies, and forage would attend and hamper the Turkestan, no less than the Transcaspian, column, and were in fact experienced by Kaufmann's threatened expedition in 1878. But the fertility of the Zerafshan basin, as well as the great resources of Bokhara, which would now be placed entirely at the disposal of Russia (as they were not then), would vanquish these obstacles, and render the Eastern army less dependent upon its base than the Western.

Total Russian strength for invasion

Comparing and combining the probable strength of the two forces, we may arrive at the conclusion that it would be possible for Russia, after long preparation, and at a suitable season of the year, to place, by the aid of the Transcaspian Railway, in conjunction with previously existing facilities, a twofold force of 100,000 men in all upon the North-west and Northern frontiers of Afghanistan. Sir Charles MacGregor, in

his famous unpublished memorandum on the Defence of India, summed up his argument with the conclusion that Russia could put 95,000 regulars, within eighty to one hundred days from the period of summons, into a position whence she could undertake the invasion of India;[1] an opinion with which my own argument is fortunate in finding itself in harmony. The further, however, she advanced from her double base, the greater, as has frequently been remarked, would be the difficulty and danger connected with the provision of supplies. Skobeleff once said that it was useless to think of invading India without an army of 150,000 men—60,000 to enter the country and 90,000 to guard the communications. The two last totals might now change places, the Russian position being so well assured that mutiny in the rear or attack upon the flank is improbable, and that a relatively much larger force might therefore be detached for invasion than would be required either for garrison service or to guard the lines. The calculations I have given will show that the sum-totals are not so overwhelming as to be beyond all means of realisation; whilst, if they were, the danger would not be by one whit diminished of what is a more probable contingency by far than so ambitious a programme, namely, a swoop either upon Herat or upon Afghan Turkestan in sufficient force to occupy and to hold either of those districts, but with no immediate intention of pushing onwards either to Kandahar or the Hindu Kush. This is the peril which England has

[1] *Life and Opinions*, vol. ii. p. 342 *seq.*

to face; and within this more limited range of action the Transcaspian Railway has given Russia a vantage-ground of incalculable importance.

Strength of Anglo-Indian army for offensive purposes

What, however, is the reply that Great Britain would have it in her power to make to such a challenge? The present strength of the British forces in India is almost exactly 70,000 British and 148,000 native troops. Of the former certainly not more than one-half and of the latter an even less proportion could either be spared for frontier defence or could be kept in the field for any length of time. If the 100,000 men so engaged were further to be divided into three sections, to operate respectively against armies advancing from Herat, Balkh, and the Pamir, it is clear that from a numerical point of view the situation would not be a sufficiently favourable one. It must further be remembered that of the British forces the major part would be native troops, of the Russian none at all with the exception of the light cavalry, and, however gallantly the Sikhs and Ghoorkas and Indian native cavalry, or even the Sepoys, might or would fight, they would necessarily be placed at a disadvantage when competing with the trained European soldiers of the Czar. I have not taken into account the armies of the feudatory princes in India, numerically important though they be; because little reliance could be placed as yet upon their discipline, and perhaps not too much upon their loyalty; and in any case they would be good for little but garrison service. Sir Charles Dilke, in the second of his recent most interesting articles upon the Indian

frontier,[1] gives figures substantially corresponding with the above. He speaks of two army corps, of 35,000 men each, half European and half Indian, as being organised on paper, and capable of mobilisation for a field army, with a reserve of 15,000 men, whose place, however, would have to be filled by six battalions from England. He calculates that the first army corps could be placed at Kandahar six weeks from the date of mobilisation, and the second army corps at Kandahar or Kabul in three months; figures which do not differ substantially from the immediate capacities of Russia in relation to Herat.

British and Russian reinforcements

When, however, we turn from the question of available troops and the probable period of their advance, to that of reinforcements, whatever advantage, if any, Great Britain may claim on the former score, vanishes altogether, or rather is converted into a serious deficit. While Russia can bring up her reserves from the Caspian, as soon as they are ready there, to the point of disembarkation from the railway train, in the inside of a week, and can place them upon the frontier in three weeks or a month, England requires nearly four weeks for her reinforcements to reach Kurrachi, and at least a week, under the most favourable circumstances, from there to the present frontier; while the figures previously given have shown the latter to be removed by several hundred miles from the probable theatre of war and opening scene of conflict. We cannot resist the conclusion,

[1] 'The Baluch and Afghan Frontiers of India.' No. II. *Fortnightly Review*, April 1889.

therefore, that England is deplorably in arrear of her rival in point of time.

The issue

I am not saying that these inequalities need have any appreciable effect upon the final issue; for most Englishmen have that faith in British character, fortified by the lessons of English history, which would enable them to await the *dénouement* without alarm. Nor am I saying that, handicapped as she might find herself both in numbers and in time, Great Britain would not be able to make an effective retort, even in Afghanistan, to a Russian menace. That is a question which I am not called upon to discuss here.[1] I am now merely pointing out the extent to which the relative position of the two Powers has been modified by recent events in Central Asia, and contrasting the initial advantages which they respectively enjoy. I am showing that while English statesmen have chattered in Parliament, or poured gallons of ink over reams of paper in diplomatic futilities at the Foreign Office, Russia, our only admitted rival in the East, has gone continuously and surely to work, proceeding by the three successive stages of conquest, assimilation, and consolidation; and that at this moment, whether her strength be estimated by topographical or by numerical considerations, she occupies for offensive purposes in Central Asia a position immeasurably superior to that of England, and for defensive purposes one practically impregnable.

If it be objected to me that I am attributing to

[1] I have endeavoured briefly to do so in an article, entitled 'Our True Policy in India,' in the *National Review* for March 1889.

General Annenkoff's railway a character and intention which its promoters would be loth to admit, and crediting it with a deliberate share in infamous designs, I answer that though General Annenkoff himself has not ignored, but on the contrary has persistently vindicated its commercial pretensions, that is not the object with which the railway was originally made, nor is it the light in which it is regarded by the bulk of Russians. It is a trivial but significant fact that the Russian illustrated newspapers, in publishing pictures of the line and its surroundings both during and since its construction, have invariably headed the engravings with the words 'On the road to India.' Upon the opening of the last section of the railway as far as Samarkand in May 1888, General Soboleff of the General Staff, one of the foremost Russian tacticians, and the Russian historian of the last Anglo-Afghan war, published an article in St. Petersburg, in which he reaffirmed his favourite contention of the possibility of a Russian invasion of India, and hailed the Transcaspian Railway as the beginning of the end, which end was to be nothing short of a future Russian campaign across the Indus. General Prjevalski, in one of his latest letters, dated from Samarkand only a month before my visit to Transcaspia, recorded his opinion of the line, over which he had just travelled, in these words: 'Altogether the railway is a bold undertaking, *of great significance, especially from a military point of view in the future.*' Prjevalski was somewhat of a fire-eater, and no friend of England; so that for anyone acquainted with his

Russian views of the Transcaspian Railway as a means of offence

character, it is quite unnecessary to put the dots on his i's. That Russian sympathisers in the foreign press indulge in similar anticipations, may be illustrated by the following extract, translated from the work of a French writer, which has no other importance than the candid testimony it affords of the widespread existence of this malignant spirit.[1]

Such is the man (*i.e.* Annenkoff) who has just struck a terrible blow at English power in India. If the end of this century has witnessed no change in the respective positions of the Russians and English in Asia, we may expect that the first years of the new century will produce a sensible modification in the attitude and power of the two adversaries. The way is traced; the road is free. The Russians are advancing with giant strides, and by a peaceful conquest. The English are hated, their authority is crumbling, their prestige vanishing. The hour is drawing near when they will at length have to pay the penalty in India for their intrigues and villanies in Europe. The day when Russia advances into the country, and proclaims as a reality the hope of which the inhabitants have long dreamed, all India will rise to march in her vanguard and drive the English out. Impatient spirits need not wait for long. General Annenkoff has fashioned the dagger which will be planted in the very heart of English power in India. If he were not already French at heart, this distinction alone would serve to make him as popular in France as he is in Russia.

Pitiful rubbish in truth this is; but, as the writer claims to have uttered it without rebuff to General Annenkoff himself, it may be quoted as typical of the meaner ravings of Russophile Jingoism.

[1] *Russes et Autrichiens en robe de chambre.* Par Théo. Crit (Théodore Cahu), 1888.

CHAPTER IX

THE ANGLO-RUSSIAN QUESTION

Rambures. That island of England breeds very valiant creatures; their mastiffs are of unmatchable courage.

Orleans. Foolish curs! that run winking into the mouth of a Russian bear, and have their heads crushed like rotten apples. You may as well say, that's a valiant flea that dare eat his breakfast on the lip of a lion.

SHAKSPEARE, *Henry V.*, Act iii. Sc. vii.

It is a d——d big question, and I should be glad to think only two or three were gathered together to think it out; but no one seems to care a two-penny dam. It will not come in their day, but I think it will come in yours and mine, and I can't help seeing its magnitude and our carelessness.

Letter of SIR C. MACGREGOR *to* SIR F. ROBERTS, *Aug.* 13, 1883.

Existence of the problem—Personal impressions—Haphazard character of Russian foreign policy—Arising from form of government—Independence of frontier officers—Responsibility for Russian *mala fides*—Compulsory character of Russian advance—Russian conquest of India a chimera—Russian attack upon India a danger—Candid avowal of Skobeleff—Evidence of past history—Schemes of Russian invasion: (i.) 1791, (ii.) 1800, (iii.) 1807, (iv.) 1837, (v.) 1855—Gortchakoff-Granville agreement of 1872-73—(vi.) 1878—Skobeleff's plan for the invasion of India—Military operations—Later movements—Subsequent schemes—Civilian endorsement—M. Zinovieff—Reality of Anglo-Russian Question now universally admitted—Russian illusions about British rule in India—Evidence of Russian generals—Real feeling in India—Regrettable Russian ignorance—Russian lines of invasion: (i.) From the Pamir, (ii.) From Samarkand and the Oxus—New Russo-Afghan frontier—(iii.) Upon Herat—Corresponding Indian frontier—Diagram of the two railway systems—Comparison of the rival advantages—England's obligations to Afghanistan—Their right interpretation—*Reductio ad absurdum*—Counter-obligations of Afghanistan—British relations with Afghanistan in the past—Synopsis of policy pursued—Character of Abdurrah-

man Khan—His health and the future—Suggested partition of Afghanistan—The Afghan army—Sentiments of the Afghans towards Russia and England—The future of Afghan independence—Prestige of Russian numbers—Policy of appointing British officers in Afghanistan—Impending developments of the Anglo-Russian question—(i.) Balkh-Kabul line of advance—(ii.) The Persian question—Russian ascendency and Persian weakness—Real aim of Russian policy in Persia—An eye upon the Persian Gulf—British policy in rejoinder—Opening up of Seistan—Effects of a Seistan railway—Summary of this chapter.

Existence of the problem

BUT perhaps it may be said that neither the construction of the Transcaspian Railway, nor the inimical pretensions with which some persons have credited it, can justify the expression of any real alarm as to the relations of Great Britain and Russia in the East, and that the theory of present danger or future complication is a dogmatist's dream. I proceed therefore to discuss the question whether there is, and, if so, why there is an Anglo-Russian Problem at all, to state the reasons for belief in its positive existence, to explain its present aspect, and to indicate its probable development in the near future. In so doing, I shall appeal for evidence to my own observations in the country, to the lessons of history, and to the published opinions of Russian officers and statesmen.

Personal impressions. Haphazard character of Russian foreign policy

In the first place let me say that I am prepared to make large and perhaps uncommon concessions to the Russophile hypothesis, not for argument's sake, but because they are demanded by truth, which has too often been distorted or lost sight of by both parties in the wordy conflict. I am not one of those who hold that Russian policy has, either for a century or for half a century, or for a less period, been animated by an unswerving and Machiavellian pur-

pose, the object of which is the overthrow of British rule in India, and to which every forward movement is strictly subordinated. When I was in St. Petersburg there appeared an article in the English 'Standard' which drove the Russian papers into a fury, by likening their advance in Asia to that of a great glacier crushing everything before it with merciless persistence, and, though its vanguard may be broken off and destroyed, ever driven onward by the irresistible pressure of the snows—*i.e.* the Russian Foreign Office—behind. A more mistaken idea cannot, I believe, be entertained. So far from regarding the foreign policy of Russia as consistent, or remorseless, or profound, I believe it to be a hand-to-mouth policy, a policy of waiting upon events, of profiting by the blunders of others, and as often of committing the like herself. Her attitude, for instance, towards Bulgaria and the Christian nationalities emancipated by the Treaty of Berlin, has been one long series of unredeemed and almost inconceivable blunders. The sole advantages that she has so far reaped from the settlement of South-east Europe, to which she then consented, have been the abdications of the two sovereigns, Alexander of Bulgaria, and Milan of Servia, and it is not yet clear whether or to what extent she will ultimately be the gainer by either.

Arising from form of government

Nor can I imagine any other policy as possible under a *régime* where there is no united counsel or plan of action; but where the independence of individual generals or governors is modified only by the personal authority of the Emperor, whose will may

override the unanimous vote of his Council of Ministers, and whose irresponsible fiat, so far from being a guarantee for stability of conduct, too often results in incoherence. A sovereign with a very strong character may impart a particular bias to the national policy, or stamp it with the die of his own individuality. But in the very immensity of his independence there is latitude for immensity of error; while a weak man, or a man easily guided by others, and, as is common with such natures, by a succession of counsellors, may create a policy of alternate bravado and vacillation, of mingled strength and imbecility. The Russian Government has often been as surprised at its own successes as rival States have been alarmed, and there is reason to believe that the Kushk episode in 1885, so far from being, as was supposed in England, part of a deep-laid design, was an impromptu on the part of Komaroff and Alikhanoff that burst with as much novelty upon the Foreign Office of St. Petersburg as it did upon that of Whitehall.

Independence of frontier officers

The one department in which Russian Ministers have always shown themselves proficient has been in turning to good account alike the unexpected services of their own adherents and the unhoped-for blunders of their adversaries. Should a Russian frontier officer make an unauthorised move involving the rupture of some diplomatic agreement, but resulting in success, his offence is condoned and excused; in the case of failure he is easily disavowed. It is scarcely possible to over-estimate the degree in which the extension of Russian dominion, particularly in Central Asia, has

been due to the personal ambition of individuals, acting in rash independence of orders from home. When the aggression has taken place and the conquest been made, the Russians are sufficiently cognisant of the A B C of Oriental politics, which a far longer experience has never taught the English to acquire, not to retreat from the position taken or the advantage gained. Tchernaieff was recalled in 1866 for having exceeded his orders; but the very steps which he had taken were pushed still further by his successor Romanovski; while the general himself was ultimately sent back as Governor-General to the province from which as Commander-in-Chief he had been recalled. Success is more commonly rewarded at once by a decoration and a jewelled sword from St. Petersburg, every such mark of the Imperial approbation being an incentive to the activity of those still unadorned.

Responsibility for Russian *mala fides*

The condition of affairs I have described is indeed inseparable from a system where military is everywhere substituted for civil organisation, and where the work that requires the genius of the statesman is entrusted to the temper of the soldier. The wonder is that the breaches of diplomatic usage or international obligation are not more frequent. As regards the occurrence of these, and the charges that have most reasonably been founded upon them of Russian duplicity and *mala fides*, my only surprise is not that Russia invented the pleas, or gave the undertaking, but that England, with childlike innocence, has consented time after time to be gulled by the same transparent device. Anything more undignified or

petulant than the now traditional howl from the London Foreign Office, which is presently appeased by a diplomatic assurance, and is never followed by action, cannot well be conceived; and if we have to complain of being affronted or duped, in many cases we have only ourselves to thank for the insult. Khiva, Khokand, Askabad, Merv, and Penjdeh—in each of these cases we raised a pitiable outcry at the prospect of annexation, and in each case sat down as humbly beneath the fact as soon as it had been successfully accomplished. For half a century English writers have proclaimed that the loss of Herat will be the death-knell of India. When the blow falls I am certain that the British quill will cover reams of foolscap, but I am not so sure that the British sword will flash from the scabbard.

Compulsory character of Russian advance

My journey led me in another respect to modify the views which are commonly held in England as to the motive of Russia's advance. Though it may be true that in starting eastward from the Caspian, and in striking at the Turkoman country, Russia had England and Afghanistan in distant view, and though I shall presently quote a most significant despatch from a Russian statesman proving this point,—yet it is also clear that, once having embarked upon a career of Transcaspian conquest, she could not possibly stop either at Geok Tepe, or at Baba Durmaz, or at Sarakhs, or at Merv. Each link in the chain as it has been forged has already found itself intertwined with its successor; and just as the first forward move into the steppe from Orenburg was bound to culmi-

nate in the possession of Tashkent, whatever assurances to the contrary might be given by that master of the Russian epistolary style, Prince Gortchakoff—so the first Transcaspian muddles of Lomakin were the inevitable forerunners of Russian barracks at Merv, and a Russian bridge over the Oxus. It does not much matter whether the geographical or ethnical principle be invoked. Either is equally serviceable for purposes of exculpation. The fact remains that in the absence of any physical obstacle, and in the presence of an enemy whose rule of life was depredation, and who understood no diplomatic logic but defeat, Russia was as much compelled to go forward as the earth is to go round the sun; and if any have a legitimate right to complain of her advance it is certainly not those who alone had the power to stop her, and who deliberately declined to exercise it.

Russian conquest of India a chimera

Whilst, however, I have confessed that in entering upon her Central Asian career, I believe Russia to have been actuated by no far-seeing policy, and in pursuing it to have been driven largely by the impulse of natural forces, I am not the less convinced that her presence there is a serious menace to India, and that she is prepared to turn it for her own purposes to the most profitable account. She is like a man who has tumbled quite naturally, but very much to his own surprise, into the inheritance of a wealthy relative, of whom he never heard, but of whom he was the unknowing heir; and who is not deterred by the adventitious source of his fortune from turning it to the most selfish advantage. Russia finds herself in a

position in Central Asia where she can both benefit herself by opening up the material and industrial resources of a continent, and attack at his most vulnerable point the formidable adversary whose traditional policy is hostile to the fulfilment of what she describes as her national aspirations in Europe. I do not suppose that a single man in Russia, with the exception of a few speculative theorists and here and there a giddy subaltern, ever dreams seriously of the conquest of India. To anyone, Russian or English, who has even superficially studied the question, the project is too preposterous to be entertained. It would be an achievement compared with which the acquisition of India by a trading company—in itself one of the phenomena of history—would be reduced to child's play; it would involve the most terrible and lingering war that the world has ever seen; and it could only be effected by a loss, most unlikely to occur, and more serious in its effects upon the human race than that of India itself, namely, the loss of the fibre of the British people. To those who solicit more practical considerations it may be pointed out that, with all the advantages of transport which she now enjoys, Russia would still be confronted with the difficulty of supplies, a difficulty great enough, as I have shown, even in the earlier stages of conflict in Afghanistan, but increasing in geometrical progression with every mile that she advanced beyond Balkh or Herat; and that the recent extension and fortification of the British frontier in Pishin and Beluchistan will supply her with sufficient preliminary nuts to crack

before she ever dips her hand into the rich garner of Hindostan. On the day that a Russian army starts forth from Balkh for the passes of the Hindu Kush, or marches out of the southern gate of Herat *en route* for Kandahar, with reason may the British commander repeat the triumphant exclamation of Cromwell (according to Bishop Burnet) at Dunbar, 'Now hath the Lord delivered them into my hand!'

Russian attack upon India a danger

But though neither Russian statesmen nor Russian generals are foolish enough to dream of the conquest of India, they do most seriously contemplate the invasion of India; and that with a very definite purpose which many of them are candid enough to avow. The Parthian retreated, fighting, with his eye turned backward. The Russian advances, fighting, with his mind's eye turned in the same direction. His object is not Calcutta, but Constantinople; not the Ganges, but the Golden Horn. He believes that the keys of the Bosphorus are more likely to be won on the banks of the Helmund than on the heights of Plevna. To keep England quiet in Europe by keeping her employed in Asia, that, briefly put, is the sum and substance of Russian policy. Sooner than that England should intervene to thwart another San Stefano, or again protect with her guns a vanquished Stamboul, Herat must be seized by a *coup de main*, and General Annenkoff's cars must be loaded with armed men. I asked a distinguished Russian diplomatist under what circumstances his Government would feel itself justified in violating the Afghan frontier, so solemnly settled a year and a half ago,

and challenging a conflict with England in the East.) His reply was very distinct. 'Upon the occurrence of either of two contingencies,' he said; 'if you tamper with the Russian dominions north of the Oxus; or if you interfere with the realisation of our national aims in Europe.' It requires no Daniel to interpret the last-named handwriting on the wall.

Candid avowal of Skobeleff

If further evidence be required of this intention, it may be found in the frank confession of every Russian officer serving in Central Asia, no less than in the authoritative utterances of Skobeleff, who usually said a few years in advance what the whole army repeated a few years afterwards. Twice in letters he employed the famous phrase about the tanning of the Asiatic hide. In 1877 he wrote:—

> An acquaintance with the country and its resources leads infallibly to the conclusion that our presence in Turkestan in the name of Russian interests can only be justified by precipitating to our own benefit the solution of the Eastern Question. Otherwise the Asiatic hide is not worth the tanning, and all our efforts in Turkestan will have been in vain. . . . Would it not be well to avail ourselves of our new and powerful strategical position in Central Asia, and our improved acquaintance with routes and means, in order to strike a deadly blow at our real enemy, unless, which is very doubtful, the evidence of our resolve to strike at his most vulnerable point should cause him altogether to give way?

And again, in 1881, after his return from Geok Tepe, he wrote:—

> To my mind the whole Central Asian Question is as clear as the daylight. If it does not enable us in a comparatively short time to take seriously in hand the Eastern Question, in other words, to dominate the Bosphorus, the hide is not

worth the tanning. Sooner or later Russian statesmen will have to recognise the fact that Russia must rule the Bosphorus; that on this depends not only her greatness as a Power of the first magnitude, but also her defensive security, and the corresponding development of her manufactures and trade. Without a serious demonstration in the direction of India, in all probability on the side of Kandahar, a war for the Balkan Peninsula is not to be thought of. It is indispensable to maintain in Central Asia, at the gates of the corresponding theatre of war, a powerful body of troops, fully equipped, and seriously mobilised.

Evidence of past history

That these ideas were not the offspring of a single brain, nor the incidental outcome of a Central Asian policy pursued with other objects, and resulting in unexpected success, may be demonstrated by historical facts, proving that for an entire century the possibility of striking at India through Central Asia has been present to the minds of Russian statesmen; and that, though such may not have been either the original motive of advance, or the incentive to subsequent annexation, it has ever sounded the tocsin of provocation in their ears, and has both encouraged many a hazardous venture, and palliated many a temporary reverse.

Schemes of Russian invasion: i. 1791

As early as 1791 a Russian invasion of India by an army advancing from Orenburg, *vid* Bokhara and Kabul, was planned by M. de St. Génie, and carefully considered by the Empress Catherine.

ii. 1800

In 1800 a joint expedition against India was designed by the Emperor Paul and Napoleon, then First Consul of France. A French army of 35,000 men was to march down the Danube to the Black

Sea, to be shipped thence to Taganrog on the Sea of Azof, and to join a Russian force of greater strength upon the Volga, whence the united expedition was to be conveyed by river to Astrakhan, and by sea to Astrabad, where the overland march through Persia was to begin for Herat, Farrah, and Kandahar.[1] Upon Napoleon retiring from the enterprise, the Czar Paul proposed to undertake it alone, and in a magniloquent letter presented India and all its wealth to the Don Cossacks, who were to supply the invading armament. His death, after General Orloff, the hetman, had already marched at the head of a large army 450 miles from Orenburg, saved the plan from the disastrous fiasco that would have followed its continued execution.

At Tilsit, in 1807, the idea was revived by Napoleon, who suggested a joint invasion to the Emperor Alexander, to be undertaken with the active assistance of the Shah. The two Emperors, however, soon drifted into collision themselves, and again the project lapsed.

[1] In his memorandum the Emperor Paul wrote in terms which have supplied a model to every subsequent Russian invasion-monger: 'The sufferings under which the population of India groans have inspired France and Russia with the liveliest interest; and the two governments have resolved to unite their forces in order to liberate India from the tyrannical and barbarous yoke of the English. Accordingly the princes and peoples of all countries through which the combined armies will pass need have no fear; on the contrary, it behoves them to help with all their strength and means so beneficent and glorious an undertaking; the object of this campaign being in every respect as just as that of Alexander the Great was unjust, when he wished to conquer the whole world.' This language is an almost verbal anticipation of that employed by Skobeleff eighty years later. Truly there is nothing new under the sun.

During the ensuing years Russia, prudently contracting the range of her ambition, laboured at strengthening her position in Persia, and utilising the military resources of the latter, which were then less relatively contemptible than now, as an advanced attacking force against India. As early as 1832, the 'Moscow Gazette,' in an access of incautious jubilation, was found declaring that 'We shall soon have no need to make any treaty with this perfidious people save at Calcutta.' And in 1837 Persia was encouraged to send that expedition against Herat, in which Russian officers and engineers, as well as Russian money, played a prominent part, but which the gallantry of a single Englishman, Eldred Pottinger, covered with ridicule and disgrace. In the same year the Russian agent Vitkievitch, who subsequently blew out his own brains from disappointment at the failure of his mission, was heard of at Kabul, offering a Russian alliance against England to Dost Mohammed. v. 1837

For a time the project of a Russian campaign against India languished. But early in the Crimean War, a plan of invasion was submitted by General Duhamel to the Emperor Nicholas; and in 1855, when that war was drawing to a close, a memorandum was drawn up by General Khruleff, sketching a practicable line of advance *vid* Astrabad, Meshed, and Herat.[1] European complications prevented much attention being paid to either of these schemes. v. 1855

[1] For a succinct account of these two designs vide *Russian Projects against India*, by H. Sutherland Edwards, chap. xii. (1885). General Duhamel's report contained these words: 'When once the necessary transports are on the Caspian and ready for use, the route from Astra-

Gortchakoff-Granville agreement of 1872–3

The apprehensions, however, excited by the rumour of these intentions, as well as by the startling advance of Russia into Turkestan between the years 1860 and 1870, led to the negotiations opened by Lord Clarendon in 1869, which eventually culminated in the Gortchakoff-Granville agreement of 1872–3, containing the celebrated engagement given by the Russian Chancellor that 'the Emperor looked upon Afghanistan as completely outside the sphere within which Russia might be called upon to exercise her influence.' How far this engagement was respected by the Russians is shown by the next occasion upon which the invasion of India figured among the pieces on the chessboard of Imperial diplomacy.

vi. 1878

When the Russo-Turkish War broke out in 1877,

khan to Astrabad is preferable to any other, because it is the shortest distance. Once in Astrabad, a footing in Khorasan will be easily obtained, and the remaining distance to Kabul is only 1,250 miles. The infantry, artillery, and ammunition can be shipped over the Caspian Sea whilst the cavalry and ammunition-train will travel from Circassia through Persia. The march through half-civilised Persia will be comparatively easy, that country being already so bound by treaties as to be incapable of serious resistance, and being moreover threatened from all sides, and so rendered powerless. What more then remains to be desired? Any active co-operation on the part of Persia involves the same on the part of Afghanistan, on account of the deadly animosity between the two nations; and this is just the *sine quâ non* of an attack upon India. . . . This once accomplished all is won; for we do not invade India with a view to making conquests, but in order to overthrow the English rule, or at least to weaken English power.'

General Khruleff also recommended an advance by Astrabad, Bujnurd, Kuchan, Meshed, and Herat, adding: 'Having secured the neutrality of Persia, and having made ourselves safe on the side of Khiva, Bokhara, and Khokand, we could at once march a force of 30,000 men to Kandahar, sending an embassy from thence to Kabul, which would finally dispose the natives in our favour and elevate our influence above that of the English. The entrance of the long-desired corps of 30,000 men into Afghanistan will excite the national antipathy of the Afghans to the English, and will shake the British power in India.'

it was thought unlikely in this country and impossible in Russia, that England could keep aloof from the struggle. The impression prevailed in Russia to the very end of the campaign, down to the signature of the Treaty of San Stefano, and even while the Congress was sitting at Berlin, that (England and Russia would sooner or later be embroiled.) It was with a view to such an emergency that in 1876 Skobeleff, then military Governor of Ferghana, sent to Kaufmann, the Governor-General at Tashkent, an elaborate plan for the Russian invasion of India; the importance of which consists not so much in the dispositions or movements recommended, as in the fact that the earlier part of Skobeleff's programme was actually carried into execution; though amid the chorus of congratulation that hailed the signature of the Treaty of Berlin in England, the omens of menace in the East were neglected, and did not emerge in their full significance till they were found to have entangled us in a war with Afghanistan before the end of the year 1878.

Skobeleff's plan for the invasion of India

Skobeleff's plan, which was subsequently matured and elaborated at a Council of War held in the Russian camp outside Constantinople, involved the simultaneous employment of armed forces and private intrigue. The Stolietoff mission was commissioned to Kabul, to negotiate a secret treaty with the Amir Shir Ali, who had already been conciliated by complimentary letters from Kaufmann;[1] Colonel Grode-

[1] The Stolietoff mission left Samarkand on June 13, 1878, the very day of the opening of the Congress of Berlin. It reached Kabul on

koff was despatched upon his ride from Samarkand to sound the feelings of Afghan Turkestan; Colonel Matsaeff was deputed with similar instructions to Badakshan and Kafiristan. Military operations were to be undertaken simultaneously by three columns, with an aggregate strength of over 20,000 men, with their bases respectively at Petro-Alexandrovsk on the

July 22, 1878, nine days after the Treaty of Berlin had already been signed, and when telegraphic news of that event was in the possession both of Stolietoff and of Shir Ali. General Stolietoff left Kabul at the end of September, with a signed treaty in his pocket; but the bulk of the mission under Colonel Rozgonoff remained behind for some months, urging the Amir 'to close the door of Kabul against those who want to enter it from the East;' 'to be as a serpent, and to make peace openly with England, but in secret to prepare for war.' The crisis came more quickly than either expected. In November war was declared by England against Afghanistan; on the 22nd Fort Ali Musjid was captured by the British. On December 2 Roberts carried the Peiwar Kotal by storm. On December 13 Shir Ali fled from Kabul with the remainder of the Russian mission, being still encouraged by Kaufmann 'to treat the English with deceit and fraud, until the present cold season passes away, when the Almighty Will will be made manifest to you; that is to say, the Russian Government having repeated the Bismillah, the Bismillah will come to your assistance.' The Bismillah, as all remember, took the form of absolute refusal on the part of Russia to interfere in the interests of the unhappy victim whom she had duped and now deserted, and of the death of Shir Ali himself in February 1879. The entire story, which we owe to the discovery of the Secret Correspondence by the British troops at Kabul, and which is without parallel in the annals of diplomatic intrigue, was invaluable for two reasons: it taught the Afghans the reliance to be placed upon Russian pledges of assistance, a lesson they have never forgotten; and it shattered the pretty theory of the British Russophiles like a house of cards. That a power, at peace with ourselves, in the face of an old-standing engagement that Afghanistan should remain outside the sphere of its influence, and with the ink upon a fresh international agreement scarcely dry, should deliberately instigate to war an ally of our own, and throw the shield of its patronage over a course of the meanest chicane, was more than the most devoted partisan could stomach. So far as I know, the good-faith of Russia has never on either side in English politics found an honest spokesman since. *Nusquam tuta fides* has become, by her own teaching, an axiom of common acceptance.

Oxus south of Khiva, at Samarkand, and at Marghilan.

Military operations

The first column, under General Grotengelm, was to march up the river to Tcharjui and to operate in conjunction with a column from the Caspian. The second, under General Kaufmann himself, was to march *viâ* Jam, on the Bokharan frontier, towards Karshi and the Oxus. The third, under General Abramoff, was to ascend the Alai from Ferghana, and endeavour to scale the Pamir Plateau, by passes leading down into Chitral or Kashmir. Nothing serious resulted from any of these projects; though Abramoff succeeded in proving that passes of a great altitude were nevertheless accessible to artillery; while Kaufmann, having marched as far as Jam, was obliged to march back again, having in the meantime stated his conviction in a letter that his army was 'fit to encounter any troops in the world, and though a march to India with such means was not to be thought of, yet, if help were forthcoming on the other side (*i.e.* from Afghanistan), he might do a great deal, and above all would set simmering such a porridge that the bulldogs would not shake themselves clear of it.'[1]

Later movements

The interest, however, of these proceedings, which were designed in strict accordance with Skobeleff's proposals, lay less in their abortive inception and premature collapse, than in the later steps by which, if successful, they were to have been

[1] Vide C. Marvin's *Russians at Merv and Herat* and *Russia at the Gate of Herat.*

followed up. Kaufmann, having entered into negotiations for an alliance with the Amir, was to advance *vid* Balkh and Bamian to Kabul, whither, if Shir Ali proved refractory, Abdurrahman Khan was to be summoned from Samarkand, and encouraged to stir up civil war; whereas, if all went well, the Russian position was to be strengthened, and the native army organised in Afghanistan; while a host of spies and emissaries, circulating throughout India, were to arouse the disaffected elements in the rear of any British force advancing from the Indus. The latter would find itself hemmed in between two fires, and in parlous plight. Victory was to be followed by letting loose a tornado of wild Asiatic horsemen upon India, and by a revival of the summary if unsentimental methods of Tamerlane. In the event of defeat the Russian army was to retire upon Herat, where it would be met and succoured by a relief column pushed forward from the Caspian.

Subsequent schemes

Such, briefly summarised, was Skobeleff's plan of campaign for the invasion of India. When the leading Russian General in Central Asia thinks it worth while to formulate so precise a scheme, and when, further, upon the first opportunity presented, and in contempt of all international morality, his Government proceeds to give it effect, it can no longer be contended that Russian designs against India are the figment of a biassed imagination, or even that an invasion is outside the region of endeavour. Since the death of Skobeleff it is well known that a revised edition of his scheme, modified

or extended in accordance with wider knowledge and more modern conditions, has been elaborated by General Kuropatkin, who was one of Skobeleff's right-hand men in Central Asia, and inherited his traditions and ideas, and who may be regarded as the leading exponent of Central Asian tactics in the Russian army. Did circumstances render it desirable to-morrow that pressure should be brought to bear upon England in Afghanistan, every detail of the plan to be pursued is already drawn up and decided upon, and the telegraph-wire could set the machinery in instantaneous motion.[1]

Civilian endorsement. M. Zinovieff

It would be an error, however, to suppose that schemes for striking at India through Afghanistan are the emanation of military brains alone, or are to be attributed to the mingled tedium and irresponsibility of garrison life in the steppes. Statecraft is at least as much interested as generalship in the solution of the problem; and behind the more daring spirits who manufacture opportunities or execute designs upon the frontier, are cooler heads and more sagacious brains in the public offices upon the Neva, whose voice, particularly under the existing *régime*, possesses at least an equal share in the decision. The present head of the Asiatic Department of the

[1] An article, entitled 'Constantinople, Russia, and India,' in the *Quarterly Review* of January 1887, by an evidently well-informed authority, contained this striking sentence: 'To those who would fain believe that this rapid advance is the result of accidental circumstances, we would, with full knowledge of the subject, reply by challenging any high official, either Liberal or Conservative, in either India or England, to say that he had not had absolute proofs before him that the Russian advance is the result of a well-matured design to dispute our Empire in the East.'

Foreign Office at St. Petersburg (a post which may be compared to our Secretaryship of State for India) is M. Zinovieff, who was formerly Russian Minister at Teheran, and is profoundly versed in the Central Asian Question. It is interesting, therefore, to have from his pen, as typical of the most distinguished civilian opinion among the bureaucracy, the admission that military necessities or frontier security were not the only motives that led Russia across the Caspian; and that statesmen as well as soldiers see in Afghanistan (the country outside the legitimate sphere of Russian influence) a fair field for the exercise of their abilities. In a despatch to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, sent from Teheran in March 1881, upon the policy of retaining the Akhal-Tekke oasis after the fall of Geok Tepe, M. Zinovieff expressed himself with much candour as follows:—

It must not be forgotten that (one of the causes which urged us to operations eastward of the Caspian Sea was the necessity for making an impression upon England, and checking her attempts against us in Central Asia.) This was the consideration that produced our expedition in 1878 to Khwaja Kala. We then became convinced of the policy of subduing the Tekkes. It is impossible to believe that in the future the same necessity will not again arise. . . . Voluntarily to give up the dearly-bought successes of our present expedition would be all the more foolish since there is at present a most important Central Asian Question as yet unsettled—viz. the future of Afghanistan. . . . Even though Gladstone's Ministry is opposed to a policy of interference or incorporation, (the English Conservatives, in the event of their return to power, will not find it impossible to discover sufficient reasons for the pacification of Afghanistan, in order to realise

their political programme, which is to push the dominions and power of England to the uttermost, and to diminish the importance of Russia in Central Asia.) Our advanced post at the north-east extremity of Khorasan, united as it is with our base on the Caspian by good lines of communication, will doubtless compel the English to be more circumspect in their ambitious schemes, as all the roads to the east and south-east are now open to us.[1]

Reality of Anglo-Russian Question now universally admitted

In deploying this chain of evidence, I have been announcing no new discovery; but, on the contrary, have recapitulated facts for the most part familiar to every student of the question: facts which render it impossible for anyone to deny that there is an Anglo-Russian Question of incalculable seriousness and vast proportions; facts, moreover, which, by the resistless force of their own accumulation, have made so deep an impression upon the public mind in this country that there is now but one opinion as to the lessons which they inculcate, and but one voice as to the duty that they impose. The school of politicians who described anxiety at Russia's advance upon India as 'old women's fears,' have closed the doors of their discredited academy. The policy of 'masterly inactivity' meets with a hundred contemptuous critics for a single honest champion; and but a few voices, feebly bleating in the wilderness, still proclaim the unshaken security of the Indus Valley Frontier. No more significant proof of the *volte-face* which has been forced upon English opinion can be given, than that it was under a Liberal Prime Minister, himself the author of the memorable phrase above quoted,

[1] Grodekoff's *War in Turkomania*, chap. xvi.

that this country was brought nearer to war with Russia in Central Asia than it has been at any time since the Crimean War; that it was by a Liberal Administration that a credit of eleven millions sterling for Imperial defence was demanded, and by a Liberal Viceroy of India that Beluchistan was annexed, the Amir of Afghanistan subsidised, and an advanced British frontier pushed forward into Quetta and Pishin. Russia may congratulate or commiserate herself upon having been convicted out of the mouth of her own witnesses.

Russian illusions about British rule in India

It will have been noticed that what may be described as the mainspring of Skobeleff's policy was the employment of such seditious or insurgent elements as might be found open to anti-British appeals in India. And here, accordingly, I am brought in contact with a cardinal misconception underlying, and to a great extent vitiating, every Russian argument bearing upon invasion—namely, the deeply-rooted conviction, which has been betrayed by every Russian who has written upon the subject, and which was expressed to me by every Russian with whom I conversed about it, that the British rule in India is one of odious and incredible tyranny, that the majority of the Indian people are plunged in bitter affliction, and that the smallest spark falling in this magazine of combustibles must produce an explosion that will blow the British authority to atoms. It is useless to point out to the Russian that his belief is scarcely compatible with the fact that over 270,000,000 of this dangerous material are held in tranquil sub-

jection by a force of 70,000 white soldiers, associated with a native army of double that number—or in other words, that there is only one armed man in India to every 1,300 of the population; whereas in Russian Turkestan and Transcaspia 45,000 men are required to control a native population of less than two and a-half millions, or at the rate of one armed man to every fifty of the native peoples. These calculations fail to disturb what is to his mind an *a priori* certainty, independent of reasoning, and based on an imperious confidence both in the popularity of Russia and in the hatred inspired by England.

Evidence of Russian generals

Every Russian general of importance in Central Asia—Kaufmann, Tchernaieff, Skobeleff, Grodekoff, Petrusevitch—has shared and has re-echoed this belief. Skobeleff wrote as follows, in the letter before quoted, in 1877:—

> Everyone who has concerned himself with the question of the position of the English in India has declared it to be precarious, and has said that it is solely maintained by force of arms, that the European troops are not more than sufficient to keep the country quiet, and that the native soldiers are not to be depended upon at all. Everyone who has concerned himself with the question of the possibility of a Russian invasion of India has declared that it is only necessary to penetrate to a single point upon the Indian frontier, in order to bring about a general rising. . . . The contact of even an insignificant force with the frontier of India might lead to a general insurrection throughout the country, and to the collapse of the British Empire.

Again, in 1880, in a letter from Transcaspia to M. Zinovieff at Teheran, we find him saying:—

My deep conviction, formed in years of almost constant service in Central Asia, is that our influence and power in these countries rests on so firm a basis, that we are absolved from the necessity of supporting our prestige by such extreme diplomatic, financial, and military measures as the British Government has been compelled to adopt. Our position in Asia has nothing in common with our position elsewhere; and its origin must be sought for in that arbitrary and morally unjustifiable state of affairs which England has kept up in India since the beginning of the present century. (The might of Russia, God be praised, brings with it in Asia peace, equality, and freedom of person and property; it is based not on privileged classes, but on the struggling multitude.)

More emphatic still is the opinion expressed by General Soboleff in an article upon Russian and British rule in Central Asia, published in 1885:—

England lays a heavy hand on her dependent peoples. She reduces them to a state of slavery only that English trade may profit and Englishmen grow rich. The death of millions in India from starvation has been caused indirectly by English despotism. Thousands of Indian natives only await Russia's crusade of deliverance. If the English would only throw aside their misplaced pride, and study a little more deeply the foundations of Russian rule in Central Asia, comparing it with their own, they would soon see quite plainly why the name of Russia enjoys such prestige in Asia, and why the natives of India hate the dominion of England, and set their hopes of emancipation upon Russia. (Russia allows full liberty to native customs, and not only does not overburden her subjects with new taxes, but even concedes them exemptions and privileges of a most extensive character.) England, on the contrary, is a vampire sucking the last drop of blood out of India.

General Annenkoff, in his pamphlet introducing the

Transcaspian Railway, not only reckoned upon the hatred of England in India as an undisputed factor in the situation, but pursued the analysis of its *raison d'être* further than most of his compeers; indulging in a series of statements, which, while they do credit to his powers of advocacy, entirely demolish his claims to accuracy, and seriously jeopardise his reputation for sense. He represented the Indian ryot as finding the whole of his slender substance swallowed up in taxation, and as worse off under the English than he was under previous rulers. He blamed the English for allowing the magnificent public works of their predecessors to fall into ruin. He revived the cock-and-bull story about ten millions perishing of starvation in Bengal in 1870. He descanted upon the systematic annihilation of native manufactures and industries by the unconditional monopoly of English capitalists. He condemned the evil effects of Christian missions, and the introduction of the English legal system. He might indeed have graduated in a certain school of English politicians, for he described the Indian Civil Service as 'a means for enriching the younger sons of the nobility.' When we find this astonishing *farrago* of nonsense solemnly enunciated by a Russian general, and a man claiming a peculiar inspiration upon this particular subject, it is not surprising that similar views are widely distributed among the Russian people, and are absorbed by them with credulous avidity.[1]

[1] Compare also the observations of the Russian writer, Captain Terentieff, in his work entitled *Russia and England in the East*, quoted by Burnaby in the preface of his *Ride to Khiva*.

Real feeling in India

A firm belief in the destiny of Russia as the heaven-sent emancipator of distressed nationalities, and of peoples groaning under British misrule, is a factor in the situation which it is difficult to say whether an Englishman should regard with greater serenity or regret. On the one hand, he feels that in precise proportion to the magnitude of the illusion will be the recoil that must ensue upon its collapse. I repeat what is the testimony of those who have spent a lifetime in India and know it best, when I say that whatever charges may plausibly or even fairly be brought against British administration in that country, whatever the discontent that may be lurking among native peoples, and however great the hopes that are habitually associated with change, there is no desire, and there would be no conspiracy for such a change as would substitute the mastery of Russia for that of Great Britain, and replace a dominion which, for all its austerity or its pride, has uniformly been characterised by public spirit, integrity, and justice, by one that has never, either in Europe or Asia, purged itself of the canker of corruption, coarseness, and self-seeking. Quite recently I read in the leading organ of the native party in India, and the strongest advocate of the Congress movement, the significant admission, 'The princes and people of India look with positive dread upon Russian rule.'

Regrettable Russian ignorance

On the other hand, the almost universal prevalence of the belief I have described in the Russian mind is to be deplored; inasmuch as it buoys up that people

with unreasonable hopes, and tempts them to aggressive undertakings. Shut up within the narrow walls of this optimistic creed, the Russian intellect is unable to look abroad, and correct its judgment by a wider survey. The little that most Russians hear about England or English rule in India is filtered through the columns of a singularly unscrupulous press. There is, for instance, a powerful newspaper, called the 'Kavkas,' published at Tiflis, which not uncommonly devotes more of its space to the discussion of Indian than it does to that of Caucasian politics. The speeches delivered at the National Congress are faithfully reported; and publicity is given to details tending to prove Indian discontent or hostility. At the same time the voluntary contributions of native princes for frontier defence, and similar evidences of native loyalty, are carefully expunged. It is not surprising that under these circumstances error is widespread, and false inference universal. No people in Europe travel less than the Russians outside their own country, or make fewer efforts to acquaint themselves with foreign affairs. I question if, apart from political emissaries, whose interest lies in magnifying rather than in exposing the illusion, there are a couple of Russian visitors to India in each year. And yet I cannot imagine a surer guarantee for the continuance of peace and the discomfiture of Chauvinism than that railway passes should be provided by the Indian Government gratis to parties of Russian travellers from Tuticorin to Peshawur. After their return home there would be much less chatter about

Indian invasion to the north of the Hindu Kush.[1] It is to be regretted that even when an intelligent foreigner with strong Russian proclivities, such as the Frenchman, M. Bonvalot, whose recent work

[1] That this is no idle conjecture may be illustrated by the case—though, so far as I know, it stands alone—of Doctor Pashino, a Russian, who, after seventeen years' service in the Asiatic section of the Foreign Office at St. Petersburg, and having subsequently acted as interpreter of Oriental languages to General Romanovski in Turkestan, paid a series of visits to India (it was said at the instance of the Emperor Alexander II.) presumably as a secret agent of the Russian Government, seeing that he adopted various disguises, and consorted with the Russophile, or anti-British, elements wherever he went. Nevertheless, in a book published after his return, he wrote as follows of British rule in India: ('I had never been able to understand how it was that the English, in spite of the interminable sermons of their missionaries, showed such a complete toleration towards the religion of their Indian subjects. In my double capacity of Russian and resident at Tashkent, I had explained this fact to myself by the insufficiency of British troops in India, and by the material weakness of the British nation. But note what wonders are accomplished by these English, who, in our opinion, have so few soldiers in India. Everywhere they open schools, colleges, hospitals. At this moment (1875) they are busily engaged in founding a university at Lahore. They give the power and right to every native, who has passed an examination, to enter the public service. They supply the natives of India with the means of becoming doctors, lawyers, advocates, and popularly elected representatives. To us Russians it seems absolutely incredible that in the entire *personnel* of the Punjab Treasury there are only five English *employés*, all the rest being natives. In time something of the same kind may be seen in Russian Turkestan. Some day it may no longer be necessary to make such a display of force to the inhabitants as to-day. But until that happy time arrives, the Russian troops must always be numerous and everywhere *en évidence*. In India, on the contrary, everything is different. There is no military Governor-General; and even the Viceroy, who resides at Calcutta, is not there to make war, but to watch over the well-being and prosperity of the people. The English are so attentive in everything affecting the natives, that every one of their civil servants is obliged to pass an examination in the languages and religions of the country; so much so that the natives have no need to learn English. At present the Hindus are enchanted with the English administration, and take pleasure in sending their children to English schools. Taxes are in general heavy in India, but they are not so ruinous for the people as they seem.')

I have more than once quoted,[1] has travelled in India and enjoyed exceptional opportunities of observing its government, he can say nothing to enlighten his patrons upon the subject. Gratitude to Lord Dufferin, whose timely interference rescued him from death in Chitral, compels him to give his work an English dedication; but fidelity to Russia forbids any admission that might be wounding to her national pride. He even makes the discovery that British rule in India 'shows what can be done by traders and men of business, who know what they want and go straight to their purpose. Nevertheless their power is, whatever they may say, more or less artificial; they are making their way up stream, which tires the boldest swimmer, whereas the others (*i.e.* the Russians) are following the current, which is far easier.'

Russian lines of invasion

Turning, however, from former designs or present misconceptions relating to a Russian movement against India, let me briefly describe the *status quo* on both sides, Russian and English, and indicate the advantages or disadvantages experienced by either. Should Russia, at this moment, feel called upon to assume the offensive against England in Central Asia, there can be no doubt that her advance would, as I have indicated in the previous chapter, be made in the main from three directions:—

1. From the upper sources of the Oxus or the Pamir upon Chitral or Kashmir.

2. From Tashkent and Samarkand upon the Oxus, Balkh, and Kabul.

3. From Merv and Askabad upon Herat.

[1] *Through the Heart of Asia.* 2 vols. 1889.

1. From the Pamir

The advanced military stations of Russia in the province of Ferghana are Marghilan and Osh, which are immediately north of the great Alai Range. From this base a column with mountain batteries would cross the Taldik Pass (11,600 ft.) and the Kizil Art (14,000 ft.) to Lake Kara Kul (12,800 ft.), whence it would proceed S.E. up the Aksu towards Tashkurgan, descending from thence by one of several passes, probably the Barogil (12,000 ft.), either upon Yasin and Gilgit, or upon Chitral and Kafiristan. From the former base a menacing movement might be made upon Kashmir; from the latter upon Jellalabad or Peshawur. Though the regions to be traversed are enormously lofty, and impassable for troops during any but the months of June to September, a column might execute a diversion in this quarter, which, without being positively serious in itself, would require to be seriously met. It would encounter no military opposition till it had reached Chitral or Kashmir.) Sir Charles MacGregor contemplated an alternative line of Russian advance in this quarter from the Bokharan state of Kolab, across the Oxus into Badakshan, and so across the Hindu Kush into Chitral. Opposition might, however, be encountered in this direction from the Afghans, who hold Badakshan in force, and who are hostile to all strangers.)

2. From Samarkand and the Oxus

Upon the second line of advance, Russia would start with advantages which she has never hitherto enjoyed; for as far as the northern bank of the Oxus she would have behind her the entire military

and material resources of Bokhara. The evidence which I have amassed in previous chapters will show that in Bokhara she would find a submissive and a not altogether unserviceable ally. No possible obstacle, but the collection of supplies and transport, could delay her in her march to the river, from which she might descend with irresistible strength upon Balkh (I use the name Balkh as the popular and most widely known appellation, though the ancient city is a heap of ruins, and the modern capital of Afghan Turkestan is called Mazar-i-Sherif), or upon Tashkurgan (also a modern town near the ancient and ruined Khulm). Concentrating and consolidating her forces in this rich plain, she could either remain there at her leisure, or push forward to Bamian and the passes of the Hindu Kush, leading direct upon Kabul. These passes could be held against her if a force competent to hold them were forthcoming, a condition which would depend upon the joint politics of Kabul and Calcutta. As far, however, as Afghan Turkestan is concerned, the Russian progress would probably be a 'walk over'; still more, if, as is constantly averred, the inhabitants of that country are secretly disposed towards her rule. This line of advance might be rendered the more formidable by the co-operation of a column advancing up the river by steamboat or by rail from Tcharjui.

(Between the second and the third or main line of Russian advance—*i.e.* between the Oxus at Bosaga and the Russo-Afghan frontier on the Heri Rud at

New Russo-Afghan frontier

Zulfikar—lies a stretch of country 350 miles in length, along which was traced in irregular lines the new frontier of 1885–87. A boundary so arbitrary and unscientific, and nowhere assisted by physical or geographical aids to demarcation—a line, as it has justly been called, of length without strength; a peace frontier established *honoris causâ*, but not a war frontier to be fought for or about—can be violated at any or every point. The base of attack upon this section of the frontier, were such a step contemplated by Russia, would naturally be Merv, with its chain of advanced posts up the valley of the Murghab as far as Penjdeh. Resistance would depend upon the quality of the Afghan garrisons of Andkui, Maimena, and Bala Murghab, which are probably not to be relied upon at all.

8. Upon Herat

Of the advance upon Herat either from Merv, or from Sarakhs, or even through Khorasan, I have spoken at length in preceding chapters. I have shown that the extreme southern point of the Russian frontier is less than 80 miles by road from Herat, that Merv is only 270 miles from Herat, Dushak the same distance, and Meshed 60 miles less; I have shown that the Transcaspian Railway could transport by any or all of these routes the resources of the Caucasus and European Russia; and that with these great facilities to recommend it, Russia is justified in looking to this line of advance with confidence as a certain guarantee at any rate of preliminary success.)

Such is the military position of Russia along her

present Afghan border from Russia to the Pamir. Taking a leap for the moment over Afghanistan, let us contrast the English frontier, 500 miles distant at the nearest point, upon the other side. The British frontier in the direction facing Afghanistan—for along nearly one-half of its extent it is not actually coterminous with Afghanistan proper, *i.e.* with the subjects of the Amir, but is separated from it by a mountainous border-land, peopled by more or less independent tribes—may roughly be divided into three sections.

Corresponding Indian frontier

1. The western borders of Kashmir and the upper Indus valley, bordering upon independent, or allied, or subsidised tribes—a section which, though it might have to be defended on the north against attacks such as that to which I have alluded from the Pamir, is not directly opposed to any Russian or pro-Russian enemy.

2. The mountainous region beginning with Attock and Peshawur, and including the embouchure of a series of passes from Afghanistan, the most important of which are the Khyber, Kurum valley, Tochi, and Gomul or Gwalari. A network of railways and military roads brings every point along this frontier into easy communication with India proper, while powerful fortifications at Attock, Rawul Pindi, and elsewhere, have been designed to resist possible invasion.[1] Within a week of the declaration of war,

[1] The northern terminus of the railway is at present at Peshawur; but surveys have already been completed for an extension to Jumrood, at the mouth of the Khyber. For a more exhaustive description of the Indian frontier, and its road and railway communications, vide an article by the writer, entitled 'The Scientific Frontier an Accomplished Fact,' in the *Nineteenth Century* for June 1889

large bodies of troops would be hastening along this line to the front. The passes that have been named supply the natural line of advance upon Kabul or Ghuzni, either of which places could be reinforced, occupied, or seized long before a Russian army was within striking distance.

3. An advanced boundary pushed forward wedge-wise from the Gomul Pass, not as yet thoroughly pacified, but about to be brought under British influence, to the Khwaja Amran mountains on the western confines of Pishin, where it touches Afghanistan proper on the south, at a distance of only sixty miles from Kandahar. This section is connected with the Indus valley in its more northerly portion by excellent military roads, the principal being that from Dera Ghazi Khan through Thal Chotiali to Quetta, a distance of less than 300 miles; and in its southerly portion by the Sind-Pishin Railway, which crosses the Indus by the magnificent newly-completed cantilever bridge at Sukkur, bifurcates at Sibi into a double railway, approaching Quetta on the one side by the Hurnai, on the other by the Bolan Pass, and is continued from Quetta over the Pishin valley to the frontier post of Chaman on the plains at the northern foot of the Amran range, a tunnel through which is at this moment in course of construction. Quetta itself occupies an almost impregnable position, and has been defended by an array of lines and advanced military forts, which render invasion from this quarter all but impossible. An interval of sixty miles of level plain alone saves Kandahar from being a British

possession, but would not stand more than a few days in the way of its becoming so were such a step found necessary on the outbreak of hostilities. This line of British advance is in direct communication by rail with the seaport of Kurrachi—distant twenty-five days from England—from which the Pishin frontier can be reached upon the third day.

Diagram of the two railway systems

It will be noticed that there is a significant parity both in the direction and objective of the rival railway systems that confront each other at the distance of a few hundred miles, and have been devised to transport the forces of both Powers to the points most suitable for advance or most exposed to attack. At a distance of 750 miles apart, as the crow flies, the Dushak-Samarkand line of Russia, on the north-west, runs almost exactly parallel with the Sukkur-Lahore line of India on the south-east, both lines covering the respective frontiers which they have been designed to serve. In both cases double advanced lines, diverging from the main base at right angles, strike out, or are intended to strike out, to the frontier itself: (on the Indian side the Sukkur-Chaman branch (Sind-Pishin Railway) is pushed out from Sukkur in a north-westerly direction, its objective being Kandahar;) the (Rawul Pindi-Peshawur line is pushed out from Lahore, further to the east, its objective being Kabul.) (On the Russian side the corresponding extensions are not yet completed, but, as has been shown, are already designed. When finished, the Merv-Herat line will strike out south-east from the main line, its objective being Herat, and will run in an almost

straight line with the Indian rail to Kandahar (the Tcharjui-Bosaga line will be pushed forward at a similar angle further to the east, its objective being Balkh) and the direction again being nearly identical from the opposite quarter with that of the Indian Peshawur line. The attitude and position of the two Powers may be aptly illustrated, in the form of a diagram, by these respective railway lines, representing, as they do, either country as standing firmly on its own ground, and stretching out defiant arms in front, in the one case to capture or to strike, in the other to resist or to defend. The diagram is also useful, as indicating the lines upon which warlike operations must infallibly commence.

Comparison of the rival advantages

A comparison of the two frontiers, British and Russian, will show, therefore, that for a zone extending to from 100 to 200 miles in front of their respective border-lines, either Power occupies on its own side a position of preponderant strength. (If it be a movement upon Kabul, Ghuzni, or Kandahar that is planned, Great Britain has no difficulty in forestalling Russia) (If the objective be Balkh or Herat, the advantage rests as indisputably with the Russians.) Unfortunately for the English, it is the latter and not the former position that will constitute the determining feature at any rate in the earlier stages of the conflict. Herein lies the inequality between the rival situations. Great Britain makes no practical gain by an advance upon Kabul, Ghuzni, or Kandahar, places which she has often previously captured, held, and voluntarily abandoned, and to which she will only

again advance, not for purposes of offence or annexation, but under the compulsion of Russian aggression from the north. Russia, however, makes a very positive and tangible gain by the seizure either of Balkh or Herat, inasmuch as they are positions of first-rate importance, captured from the enemy, and carrying with them the control of large tracts of country of great potential fertility and strategical consequence. The advantage to Russia will be all the greater if she so times her movement upon either place as to effect the occupation just before winter begins. No military operations can be undertaken, in order to dislodge her, till the ensuing spring; and though in the meantime the dogs of war might have been baying over two continents and in many lands, yet snow and ice are not confined in winter to Afghanistan, and the bark of the English would so far have been worse than their bite; while on her side Russia would have had six clear months within which to fortify either or both strongholds (Herat has powerful fortifications already, constructed under the superintendence of British engineer officers), and would resume the Asian campaign in secure possession of both disputed points. War or peace, victory or defeat, might ensue; but she would undoubtedly have scored what may be described as two by tricks, whatever might be said of honours, in the opening hand.

England's obligations to Afghanistan

Without entering into details of strategy, which a civilian is ill-qualified to handle, it is worth while pausing for one moment to consider what ought to be the response that England should make to such

a move, involving these initial advantages, on the part of our antagonists. There exists a school of politicians, of whom Sir Charles Dilke is the accomplished spokesman, who are inclined to emphasise to the uttermost the pledges that have at different times been made by the British or Indian Government to the Amir of Afghanistan, and who argue that any reluctance to rise to the full scope of the responsibilities thus assumed, will involve both a serious breach of faith and a disastrous loss of influence. Sir Charles Dilke, in the following passage, criticises a paragraph in an article by myself that appeared in the 'Nineteenth Century' in February 1889 :—

> There is, to my mind, no conceivable doubt that we are bound by every consideration of honour to the present Amir. If by any chance he were to be attacked by Russia, he would expect our assistance, and, in my opinion, has a right to count upon it. Mr. George Curzon has taken exception, in a recent article, to my words—'We are solemnly pledged to defend against Russia the integrity of Afghanistan.' 'A pledge,' he says, 'was given to the present Amir . . . to aid him in resisting unprovoked aggression on his dominions; but the very important qualification was appended, "to such extent and in such manner as may appear to the British Government necessary."' Mr. Curzon seems to think that no engagement exists morally compelling us to resist the infringement of the Afghan new north-west frontier. Now the pledges of which I spoke are contained in statements which have been made to the Amir on several occasions. Mr. Curzon quotes one of 1880. I believe that the words used in another, in 1883 or 1884, were to the effect that so long as the Amir conformed to our advice he would be assisted in repelling unprovoked aggression, and that her Majesty's Government did not intend to permit interference

by any foreign Power with the internal or external affairs of Afghanistan. The Amir has undoubtedly conformed to our advice, and under this pledge we are, in my opinion, bound to him. Again, when the Amir came to India in 1885, it is understood that Lord Dufferin told him that a Russian advance upon his frontier would be met by England by war all over the world. It was immediately after this that the Amir said publicly in Durbar, in Lord Dufferin's presence, 'The British Government has declared that it will assist me in repelling any foreign enemy;' and the Viceroy appeared to accept this as an accurate statement of fact.[1]

Their right interpretation

Now I do not suppose that any Englishman is desirous either of withdrawing from the pledged word of England, or of committing an act of desertion that would bring upon us the merited hostility of the Afghans. I do not say that the unprovoked violation of the north-west Afghan frontier by Russia can be tacitly accepted, or that England is to submit without a murmur to so gross an outrage upon international faith. Russian statesmen understand perfectly well that such an act involves a legitimate *casus belli*, and they will probably only have deliberate recourse to it when they wish to provoke war with Great Britain, or after hostilities have already broken out. English statesmen understand the act in the same sense, and are not likely to repudiate any obligation which it may impose upon them. But the point upon which I insisted before, and which I repeat now, is, that there is nothing in any engagement to Abdurrahman Khan, public or private, compelling British troops to undertake the insane and preposterous task, at the beck even of an allied and

[1] *Fortnightly Review*, April, 1889.

loyal Amir, of advancing many hundreds of miles from their base into a country from which, in the event of disaster, retreat would be impossible, of forcibly turning Russia out of the positions which by craft or by force she might have acquired, and of re-establishing the purely arbitrary frontier-line fixed in 1885–7. This is the point which must be met, unpalatable though it may be, and to which the advocates of a too scrupulous interpretation of promises either have no answer at all, or return an answer so random and foolhardy—as, for instance, when they recommend a British advance in force to Herat and the Oxus, and the expulsion of Russia from the Khanates—as to excite ridicule rather than argument. At any moment the situation may present itself that Russia, with or without provocation, may decide to infringe the Afghan boundary, and to occupy either Balkh or Herat. What shall England do in reply? To that question critics may reasonably be called upon to give a practical answer. England may, she perhaps will, declare war; or, without actually declaring war, she may assist the Afghans by the loan of British officers and the gift of money and arms, in an attitude of active resistance. It is generally conceded that at such a juncture a British force should at once re-occupy Kandahar; and should be prepared to occupy Ghuzni and Kabul, or positions commanding the approaches thereto, in co-operation with and support of the Afghans, so as to anticipate a Russian attack from the north. But, whatever may be the immediate action that statesmen or generals decide to take, it is

essential that England should retain absolute freedom of choice as to the employment of means, and that rash counsellors should not, by magnifying obligations or by minimising obstacles, draw her into a policy of militant vagrancy over regions which, if re-conquered, she would not be prepared to garrison, and where the utmost that she could effect would be to re-establish the *status quo*, only to be violated again in the future, at the unfettered discretion or selfish caprice of our opponents.

Reductio ad absurdum

The argument that any infraction of the newly-established Afghan frontier must, as a matter of honour, be followed by a British declaration of war, subject to no qualifications, has indeed only to be stated in its most likely mode of application, in order to be condemned. For, thus translated, what does it imply? It means that any temporary, or incidental, or marauding, or even unauthorised, violation of the line between the boundary pillars by a *sotnia* of Cossacks, or a squad of Turkoman militia, under the command of some Alikhanoff or Targanoff, is to plunge a world in arms. Such a movement might take place any day, and has already more than once taken place, in response to an irruption from the Afghan side, which can either be provoked by intentional Russian insolence, or more covertly effected by the circulation of the paper rouble. To contend that such an incident must of necessity constitute a *casus belli* between the two Powers, is gratuitously to place in the hands of Russia an advantage of overwhelming importance, nothing less in fact than the

liberty to force England into a war whenever she pleases, and at the moment most convenient for herself or least agreeable to us. Supposing, for example, that General Boulanger came into power in France, and, as is very widely anticipated, sought to increase his popularity with his countrymen by giving us trouble, perhaps even by going to war with England, in or about Egypt; and supposing that at such a moment a telegram arrived from Calcutta that a Russian detachment had committed an act of 'unprovoked aggression' upon Afghan territory and was encamped on the near side of the pillars—what would be our position, if with one war already on hand in Europe, we were forced against our better judgment and by a false obligation to embark upon a roving expedition into the heart of Asia? I have assumed no unlikely contingency; but even if this be scouted as improbable, it will be in the power of every one of my readers to imagine a probable case, in which England would equally be the sufferer.

Counter-obligations of Afghanistan

To the hyper-sensitive custodians of British honour one is tempted further to address the question, whether pledges and microscopic fidelity in their fulfilment are to be an obligation imposed upon one party alone, and that the party which has nothing to gain and not the most to lose by the conflict? Are we to be bound to the chariot-wheels of the Amir, while the latter does nothing for us in return? All offensive or defensive alliances impose duties and even risks upon those who make them; but these duties and risks are mutual, and should not be heaped

upon the shoulders of one of the two contracting parties alone. There is no reciprocity in an engagement by which Abdurrahman is to have a lien upon the support of British troops in outlying portions of his dominions, whenever these happen to be invaded, but under which British soldiers, British officers, even British civilians, are not otherwise suffered to set foot in the country for whose alliance they pay in hard cash—an engagement which does not even admit the presence of a British Resident at the court whose policy we affect to control, or of British agents at the frontier-posts for which we are expected submissively to acquiesce in the summons to fight. To quote a familiar phrase, the engagement thus interpreted is one in which England is to receive all the kicks and none of the halfpence. A far more remunerative task than splitting hairs as to the verbal significance of British obligations to Afghanistan would be the attempt to ascertain what are Afghan obligations to Great Britain.

British relations with Afghanistan in the past

For fifty years Afghanistan has inspired the British people with a feeling of almost superstitious apprehension. So gloomy a Nemesis has attended British proceedings in that country, our military annals are stained by so many Afghan memories of horror, that it is only with the greatest reluctance that Englishmen can be persuaded to have anything to do with so fateful a region. And yet there is nothing inherent either in the country or in its people, though the former is rugged and mountainous, and the latter are turbulent and treacherous, that should

daunt English hearts or defy English arms. Other and less accessible countries, other and more difficult peoples, have been successfully assimilated or subdued. We owe our record of Afghan failure and disaster, mingled indeed with some brilliant feats and redeemed by a few noble names, to the amazing political incompetence that has with fine continuity been brought to bear upon our relations with successive Afghan rulers. For fifty years there has not been an Afghan Amir whom we have not alternately fought against and caressed, now repudiating and now recognising his sovereignty, now appealing to his subjects as their saviours, now slaughtering them as our foes. It was so with Dost Mohammed, with Shir Ali, with Yakub, and it has been so with Abdurrahman Khan. Each one of these men has known the British both as enemies and as patrons, and has commonly only won the patronage by the demonstration of his power to command it. Small wonder that we have never been trusted by Afghan rulers, or liked by the Afghan people! In the history of most conquering races is found some spot that has invariably exposed their weakness like the joints in armour of steel. Afghanistan has long been the Achilles' heel of Great Britain in the East. Impregnable elsewhere, she has shown herself uniformly vulnerable here.

Synopsis of policy pursued

Without recapitulating ancient history, it may briefly be stated that our relations with Afghanistan in the forty years between 1838 and 1878 were successively those of blundering interference and of un-

masterly (I have always supposed it to be a *lapsus calami* to write 'masterly') inactivity. The first period, which is perhaps the darkest page in English history, culminated with the restoration of Dost Mohammed, the sovereign whom we had forcibly deposed and defeated, but who ended by forcing his recognition upon us. The policy of the second period found some slight justification during his lifetime—for an abler ruler never controlled a tribal federation—but was foolishly prolonged after his death into a very different era, when rival chieftains were contending for a supremacy, which we did nothing whatever to decide, and when finally Shir Ali, the successful combatant, already estranged from England by a course of neglect, was known to be lending an ear to honeyed words from Russia. Then the policy of unmasterly inactivity broke down with a crash. The second Afghan war ensued; and after the now familiar display of mingled valour and incapacity, which might have been directly modelled upon the pattern of 1841, England, having enthroned a new Amir, found herself confronted with the question, what was to be the character of the new *régime*. Lord Beaconsfield, it is known, favoured the adoption of an advanced or scientific Indian frontier, committing the border passes to British custody; and, despairing of another Dost Mohammed, leaned towards a partition of Afghanistan among separate chieftains; while he is even said (though such shortsightedness is scarcely conceivable) to have meditated the surrender of Herat to Persia.

Mr. Gladstone, coming into power in 1880, before the close of the war, declined to endorse so forward a policy, and an alternative suggestion was required. No one had a word to say for the old unmasterly inactivity, which was buried without a sigh, and over whose gravestone, as above the nameless friar in Worcester cloisters, might be written the epitaph 'Miserrimus.' The new theory of a Buffer Afghanistan, independent though subsidised, and friendly though strong, was evolved. The British retired; Kandahar was surrendered; and Abdurrahman was left to carve out his own fortune. Accident has produced in him the very man for the purpose, the sole type of character that could give stability to so precarious a structure, and endow a stuffed figure with the semblance of life.

Character of Abdurrahman Khan

Cruel, vindictive, overweeningly proud, but of inflexible purpose, fearless heart, and indomitable energy, he has spent a reign of nine years in incessant fighting, has broken down and drenched in blood every revolt of his mutinous subjects, has extended his dominions over all and more than the lands ruled by Dost Mohammed, and has even established his power in the difficult regions of the upper Oxus, in Badakshan, Wakhan, Shignan, and Roshan. He has never been friendly to Russia since his return from Samarkand in 1880; and, though suspicious of English interference, and loth to see foreigners in his country, has given the British Government no reason to question his loyalty. The actual dependence of Abdurrahman upon England and his increasing

willingness to admit it to his subjects, were significantly illustrated during the Ghilzai rebellion in August 1887, when a royal proclamation was posted in the Bazaar at Kandahar, to the effect that the British were holding in reserve six infantry divisions (of nine regiments each), as well as cavalry and artillery, ready to march into Afghanistan to assist the Amir against his enemies. There was of course not a grain of truth in the assertion.

His health and the future

So long as Abdurrahman lives, a Buffer Afghanistan may continue to figure in the list of independent states. His health is, however, extremely precarious; whilst at any time a ruler thus feared, and in parts detested, is exposed to the danger, which he recently so providentially escaped, of assassination. His two sons are not of royal blood, and would therefore not appeal to the loyalty of the Afghan tribes; nor has either of them shown any capacity to succeed his father. Upon the death of the latter it is to be feared that a time of trouble will again recur, more critical than any of its predecessors, inasmuch as Russia notoriously looks to such an emergency as providing an excuse for her next advance. Rival candidates for the throne will at once be forthcoming—Is-hak Khan from Samarkand, possibly Ayub Khan from India, and very likely some other claimant in the country or from the Afghan army—and in the state of civil war thus engendered, it will not be Russia's fault if she does not pull some chestnuts out of the fire.

There is very little concealment as to the nature

Suggested partition of Afghanistan

of Russian projects in Afghanistan. Pilot balloons are constantly flown in the Russian press to test the currents of public feeling. Years ago Skobeleff wrote, 'It is my conviction that if England and Russia should have to knock up against each other in Central Asia, the nearer the better;' and a coterminous frontier, involving direct contact, and multiplying and magnifying to an incalculable extent the capacity to strike, is the present object of her ambition. This coterminous frontier is supplied, in the Russian argument, by the long and lofty range of the Hindu Kush, the Great Divide of Central Asia, with its western prolongations, the Koh-i-baba, and the Siah Koh, extending to the Persian border south of Herat. In the territory south of the Hindu Kush Russia professes no immediate concern. Russian annexation up to the point named would mean the absolute Russification of all the Oxus Khanates from Badakshan westwards; (the Russian possession of Kunduz, Khulm, Balkh, Shibergan, Siripul, Andkui, and Maimena; and further west, of the entire Heri Rud basin, as well as of the fortress of Herat,) I have pointed out elsewhere[1] that such a consummation, so far from being retarded by physical obstacles, is facilitated by geographical and even ethnographical considerations; whilst in an earlier part of this chapter I have indicated the strategical advantages enjoyed by Russia in this quarter. But on the other hand Englishmen should know what the realisation of such a project would mean to this country and to

[1] *Nineteenth Century*, February 1889.

the Indian Empire. It would involve the absolute extinction of a strong and united Afghanistan; for it would leave only the phantom of an Amir at Kabul, if it left that. It would hand over to Russia, a possible enemy, the two granaries of the Oxus basin. It would necessitate a considerable addition to the Indian army, and a burdensome charge upon Indian finance; and, so long as English and Russian interests conflict in any part of the world, it would place the Indian Empire in perpetual risk of panic. These are the *pros* and *cons* which Englishmen will be called upon to balance, when the question is ripe for settlement—a period that may come sooner than many imagine. We may some day be driven to partition as a *pis aller*. Let us at least not embrace it as a programme.

The Afghan army

In the face of such a crisis it may be worth while to appraise some of the subsidiary factors on either side. Of the quality of the Afghan army it is difficult to speak with positiveness. On paper it is said to be 60,000 strong, and has an excellent organisation, based on the English model, first adopted in 1869 by Shir Ali, and since improved by Abdurrahman Khan. There are divisions, brigades, regiments, batteries, troops, and companies, adopting semi-British uniforms and English-sounding words of command. But though characterised by individual bravery, and formidable in guerilla or mountain warfare, the entire force, in the absence of scientific drill or discipline, is quite unfitted to withstand a European army. The Russians, who made mincemeat of the Afghan soldiery

at the Kushk in 1885, profess the utmost contempt for them on the battle-field, although they are themselves but partial judges, never having encountered the warlike tribesmen of the Kabul province, who have several times given the English great trouble. Since that date, moreover, the Afghan army has been rendered a more powerful body either for offence or defence by the distribution of the rifles and ammunition which the Indian Government has from time to time given to Abdurrahman, and to the employment of which he owed his victory last year over Is-hak Khan. Inferior, however, though the army still may be from a European standpoint, it yet possesses fighting material that might be shaped in qualified hands into a valuable instrument of warfare. It was rumoured in 1888 that the Amir had applied for British officers to instruct and drill his troops; and although the request was either not made, or if made was not granted, it is the unanimous opinion of British officers who know the country and its people, that, led by European commanders, the Afghans would make as fine a native soldiery as exists anywhere in the East. It is indeed as a recruiting ground that Afghanistan may develop a new military and political importance in the near future, the Russians standing in urgent need of such an auxiliary owing to the craven and sedentary character of all the peoples, with the exception of the Turkomans, whom they have yet subdued; and the English also requiring to tap some fresh springs of Eastern manhood, in view of the progressive deterioration and loss

of military instincts among those races on whose hereditary valour they have hitherto relied. To the English the experiment would be no new one. The Afridis already make capital soldiers, and have served us faithfully in several wars. The Jamshidi irregulars in the Amir's service provided an excellent cavalry escort to the English Boundary Commissioners in 1884–5. Further to the south, the Beluchi levies, organised by Sir Robert Sandeman, are a splendid body of men, and render invaluable service in the mountainous region which they patrol. Among the Pathans, Shinwarris, Duranis, Ghilzais, Hazaras, and other fighting tribes of Afghanistan, there is abundant material, which, if properly handled, with a due regard to tribal idiosyncrasies and traditions, and under guarantees of fixed payment, might in the future be converted into a loyal and impenetrable advanced guard protecting the glacis of the Indian Empire. It has been calculated that 200,000 fighting men might be thus recruited between the Russian and English borders. Russia is fully alive to the existence of such a possibility; and if we do not use the material for defence, she will enlist it for offence.

Sentiments of the Afghans towards Russia and England

As regards the respective popularity of the two nations with the Afghans there is probably not much intrinsically to choose. In either case there is sufficient cause for dislike. Against the English there is the memory of past invasions, the confidence inspired by Afghan successes, and the contempt excited by a policy of stern reprisals followed by misinterpreted retreat. Against the Russians is the

recollection of the unpardonable breach of faith to Shir Ali, who was entrapped by their counsels to his ruin and then abandoned, the more recent outrage on the Kushk, and the fear of a future destruction of native independence. On the other hand, British officers in the country have left on record that the Afghans manifested a most friendly bearing towards them, and spoke of them as brothers; while the British Commissioners on their return to India, in October 1886, were received with much respect at Kabul. There can be no doubt that the surrender of Kandahar, though open to temporary misconception, and the general avoidance of recent intrusion into Afghan politics or the Afghan country, have predisposed the mass of the people to a more favourable attitude towards England than at any time during the last twenty years. For their part, the Russians, with a sublime self-satisfaction, are equally convinced that Afghanistan, in common with the rest of the East, is thirsting for the Muscovite yoke. Apart from the circumstances of the hour, the Afghans in all probability draw little distinction between the merits of the two Powers, their one object being to keep their own independence and clan organisation; or, failing that, to make the best terms, and perhaps keep the worst faith, that they can with the conqueror. Herein lies a distinct advantage to the British; for England has shown clearly enough that she has no desire to tamper with Afghan freedom, while Russian advance can mean nothing short of annexation. To a large extent the security of the Indian Empire in the future may be

said to depend upon the chance, now offered to Great Britain, of appearing, not as the enemy, but as the saviour, of Afghanistan. The present Amir has testified his anti-Russian bias, and his resolve to maintain the territorial integrity of his kingdom in his time by applying for the services of British officers and the gift of a siege train, to assist him in the fortification and defence of Herat; and by planting along his northern borders, both along Sir West Ridgeway's frontier, and along the left bank of the Oxus between Khulm and Kamiab, colonies of the most warlike Afghan tribes, to resist the process of absorption which Russian intrigue was rumoured to be already effecting with the more facile Uzbeg material in those parts. Too much reliance, however, must not be placed upon the fighting capacity of the new garrisons. The rouble is a powerful instrument of conciliation; and when the Comte de Cholet records a clandestine visit of an Afghan frontier officer to the tent of Alikhanoff at Pul-i-Khatun, he is probably relating no uncommon incident.[1]

The future of Afghan independence

It is scarcely possible to exaggerate the importance to Great Britain, indicated in the last paragraph, of confirming the impression which the Afghan tribes are already beginning to hold, that the English are, and will be in the future still more, the defenders of their national liberty. It is the desirability of strengthening this conviction that renders the present policy of England towards Afghanistan one of peculiar delicacy, and that may be held to some extent to

[1] *Excursion en Turkestan*, p. 124.

explain the attitude of reserve for which the Indian Government might otherwise by some be held open to blame. Too active an interference in support of a ruler, whose savage dominion must be resented just in proportion as it is feared by his subjects, might convey the opposite impression of a sovereign imposed by hostile bayonets, and supported by alien rupees. On the other hand, while the Amir remains loyal, he has an unquestioned claim upon British backing. The English can neither afford to desert him, nor to allow their names to be too closely associated with the acts of an unmerciful and barbarous system of repression. If by a just mean the allegiance of Abdurrahman and the stability of his throne can for some time longer be secured, and if at the same time we can so clearly convey to the great Afghan tribes the dependence of their hopes of continued national existence upon our alliance, that, at the death of the Amir, we shall find them appealing to our help, rather than arming against our dictation—the Indian Government may consider that it has solved the Gordian knot by loosening its folds instead of cutting them in twain.

Prestige of Russian numbers

The Russians are undoubtedly helped by the prodigious reputation which they have acquired in Central Asia owing to an unchecked and apparently irresistible advance, by the credit that their troops enjoy of being merely the advanced guard of inexhaustible numbers, and by the noise and swagger of their movement. It has been noticed by M. Bonvalot, as well as by British officers and travellers, that while the inhabitants of these regions are amazed

at the wealth of England, they are impressed by the numerical strength of Russia.[1] England from time to time hurls at them a handful of soldiery, which advances, conquers, and retires; and they have no idea of what may be proceeding upon the other side of the Suleiman or Himalayan wall. Russia, on the other hand, bears down upon them like the flood of an incoming tide, sweeping all before it along an extended line of shore. It is the numbers and the self-assertion of Russia to which Abdurrahman makes special allusion in his letter to the Viceroy of India, acknowledging the final settlement of the Afghan Boundary:—

It is one of the results and consequences of the sincere friendship of the two parties (*i.e.* England and Afghanistan) that the Russian Government, *notwithstanding its large number of troops, its power, and its natural noise and despotism,* has entered the door of refraining and abstaining from conquest and war with these two auspicious Governments, as it knew that it (the war) would have an unhappy result, and would entail a heavy loss on itself. Had it not seen the foundation of the friendship of these two united kingdoms strong and firm, and the basis of the affection and sympathy of the two Governments solid and stable, it would hardly have come down from the palace of its desire and the mansion of its wish to subjugate Afghanistan and occupy India. I look upon the kind friendship of the illustrious British

[1] Vide Major C. E. Yate's *Northern Afghanistan*, p. 303: 'The Afghans, I am sorry to say, are just as surprised as the Russians at the smallness of our army. An Afghan general asked me, "Why don't you keep a larger army? Look at the Russians. They have no money but they have lots of men. You have lots of money but no men. Why don't you get more? We are all ready to fight with you side by side," he added, and I believe he was sincere in saying so; but still he shook his head over the small number of our men.'

Government as the cause of the flourish of the tree of the Afghan Government—and it is undoubtedly so.[1]

Policy of appointing British officers in Afghanistan

Among the steps that have been suggested for fortifying British influence in Afghanistan, and procuring timely warning of hostile intentions on the part of Russia, is the institution of British officers at the advanced outposts of Balkh (Mazar-i-Sherif), Maimena, and Herat. This has long been a *vexata quæstio* of Central Asian politics, bequeathed from the days of Dost Mohammed and Lord Lawrence. Dost Mohammed treated the refusal of such a concession as a matter of principle, and is said to have transmitted it to his son on his death-bed. Shir Ali, while never wavering in his opinion about Kabul, where he argued that the appointment of a British officer would both be unsafe, and would entail a loss of prestige upon himself, was disposed at the Umballa Durbar in 1869 to consider favourably the appointment of agents at Balkh and Herat. Lord Mayo, however, was reluctant to commit himself to so positive a step; and when the project was revived at the Peshawur conference in 1877, Shir Ali's envoy would not hear of any such concession. The murder of Cavagnari at Kabul in 1879, after the second Afghan war had led to his nomination as Resident at the Court of the Amir, naturally disposed men's minds to revert to the policy of non-interference, and to magnify the wisdom of Dost Mohammed and Shir Ali; and the proposal for a British representative at Kabul has not

[1] Letter written on August 16, 1887. Vide *Parliamentary Papers*, 'Central Asia,' No. 1, 1888, p. 21.

since been revived. The argument, however, that might be thought to hold good of the capital does not equally apply to Herat and Balkh, the former of which places is inhabited by a mixed Iranian and non-Afghan race, well-disposed towards the English,[1] and not given to violence or intrigue, while the latter possesses an Uzbeg or Turki population of similar characteristics. I cannot help thinking that British officers might now with perfect safety be despatched to both these places. Herat, indeed, has twice been governed for a considerable time by Englishmen, by Pottinger in 1838, and by D'Arcy Todd in 1840, and has lately been fortified under the direction of British officers; and if Abdurrahman attaches any value, as he unquestionably does, to the retention of Afghan Turkestan and the Herat province, he should be the first to see the wisdom of such an arrangement. At Kandahar a similar appointment is perhaps unnecessary, or is certainly less necessary, as the town is within a few miles of the British frontier, and its inhabitants are said to look back regretfully upon the British occupation of 1879–81. As regards Kabul, though historical precedent is ominous, and the desire not to wound Afghan susceptibilities is praiseworthy, there is an undeniable absurdity in presenting 120,000*l.* a year and scientific weapons of warfare to a monarch at whose court we are not even permitted to maintain a diplomatic representative. Sir Bartle Frere said very pertinently in 1881:—

[1] Vide Captain A. C. Yate's *Travels with the Afghan Boundary Commission*, p. 375; and Major C. E. Yate's *Northern Afghanistan*, pp. 15, 18, 21.

I have never believed in the validity of this objection (*i.e.* the insecurity of the English envoy), and I should consider it quite chimerical unless it were formally stated by the ruler himself. In that case, I should point out to him the absurdity of his calling himself the ruler of a country where he could not ensure the safety of an honoured guest. I should decline to communicate with him except through a representative accredited to him, like our envoys at other Asiatic courts, and I should state clearly the impossibility of our talking of friendly relations with a nation where our representative would not be welcomed.[1]

In the same context Sir Charles MacGregor argued that if A were murdered, we ought to send B, and if B were murdered, then C, and so on; a logic which, however incontestable and, to the student of Anglo-Afghan diplomacy, refreshing, is more congenial to Russian than it is to British methods. It may be pointed out that the present is a singularly opportune moment for the renewal of such a demand, the attitude of the Afghans being friendly, and the appointment of English officers being now less susceptible of interpretation as a badge of Afghan subjection, than as a guarantee of British alliance. In an emergency native substitutes, such as we now maintain at Kabul and Herat, though they may do passably well in untroubled times, will be found lacking both in authority and prestige.

Impending developments of the Anglo-Russian question

Finally I turn to the question of impending developments of the Anglo-Russian question, and to the steps, precautionary or otherwise, that should be taken by this country.

[1] *Africa and India.* By Sir Bartle Frere. 1881.

i. Balkh-Kabul line of advance

Though the attention of both our statesmen and our soldiers has for long been mainly concentrated upon the Herat-Kandahar line of advance, owing to the superior physical advantages of the route for an invading army, and though the Transcaspian Railway facilitates and encourages such a movement on the part of Russia, it will be a great mistake if we ignore the possibility of the selection of the Balkh-Kabul line. The very fact that Great Britain has been spending millions of money, laying miles of rails, boring a tunnel, and constructing extensive fortified outworks in Pishin, may tempt the Russians, who are not fonder than any other people of putting their head into the lion's mouth, to make an experiment in another direction. Kabul is at once the capital of the sovereign, and the headquarters and rallying-place of Afghan fanaticism. Without Kabul the Russians might boast of no mean conquest in the acquisition of Herat and Afghan Turkestan. But the conquest would not be of the Afghan ruler or of the Afghan people. Once at Kabul, however, or in command of the routes to Kabul, they would have driven a wedge into the heart of Afghanistan itself, and would compel the Amir to become either a fugitive or a puppet; whilst their position there would have a secondary effect of equal strategical importance, inasmuch as it would enable them to turn the flank of a British army on the Helmund or at Kandahar. At Kabul, too, the greater proximity to India will always constitute a temptation to Russia; though it may be argued that this is counter-

balanced by the greater distance from her base on the Oxus, and by the danger to which a Russian force at Kabul would always be exposed, of being cut off in the winter months, when the defiles of the Hindu Kush, from 9,000 to 12,000 feet high, are impassable from ice and snow. On the other hand, the Kabul district possesses a superior fertility and cultivation to any other portion of Northern Afghanistan, and might constitute an advanced base in itself. We shall do well, therefore, to keep a very watchful eye upon Kabul and the North, and, as soon as our defensive operations are completed in Pishin, to see whether there is not another door to the Indian stable that still stands ajar. Twice in the last half century has Kabul been made the cockpit of British disaster; it may yet come to be regarded as a citadel of British salvation.

What action is required, or what steps should be taken for its protection or reinforcement, it is for soldiers and strategists to say. It was proposed after the second Afghan War to continue the rails from Peshawur up the Khyber Pass to Lundi Kotal (the frontier outpost held by an Afridi garrison). This project has since been abandoned; and a limited extension, only ten miles in length, within British territory, from Peshawur, to Jumrood at the mouth of the pass, has been authorised. In face of the contingencies which I have named, the larger scheme may again be heard of; and to those who detect in such a proposal the glimmer of Jingo war-paint, I make the unhesitating and unequivocal reply, based

upon a personal inspection of both the Indian and the Russian frontier railways (in each case originally constructed for strategical purposes), that there is no such means of pacifying an Oriental country as a railway, even a military railway; and that if for bullets and bayonets we substitute roads and railroads as the motto of our future policy towards Afghanistan, we shall find ourselves standing upon the threshold of a new and brighter era of relations with that country.

Another proposal is to establish an advanced British position at Peiwar Kotal or thereabouts, at the head of the Kurum Valley, commanding the approach both to Ghuzni and from the south to Kabul. The Kurum Valley is not in Afghan possession, being one of the assigned districts ceded to Great Britain by the treaty of Gundamuk in May 1879, and subsequently handed over by us, as a reward for faithful services during the war, to the local tribe of the Turis, who, being Shiite Mahometans, are antagonistic to the Sunnite Afghans, and who are understood not merely not to object to, but even to desire, British reoccupation. It was part of the scheme of Lord Beaconsfield's Scientific Frontier to station a British garrison at Peiwar, and to raise a local corps for military service. A good road, more than once utilised in our Afghan campaigns, leads up the Kurum Valley from the present Indian frontier to Peiwar; and the position thus acquired would, without wounding Afghan susceptibilities, possess a double strategical significance, both as providing an alternative route to Kabul and as facilitating the relief or occupation of Ghuzni.

ii. The Persian Question

A second, and in some respects an even more probable, arena of future activity is presented by Persia and the Persian Question. Persia stands a good second to Afghanistan in the category of British diplomatic failure in the East, the result in this instance less of positive error than of deplorable neglect. The Russian situation in Persia at the present moment may be roughly indicated by the statement that it is the counterpart, on a much more extended scale, of that which was enjoyed by England in the early years of this century. The influence and authority then exercised at Teheran by British representatives have now been transferred to our rivals, who possess the further advantage, never owned by us, of a complete military and strategical ascendency along the entire northern frontier of Persia from the Araxes to the Heri Rud. With Transcaucasia strongly garrisoned by Russian troops, the Caspian a Russian lake, and Transcaspia a military province, traversed by a railway, Persia is in the position of the scriptural vineyard whose wall is broken down, and the King of kings is as helpless as a fly in a spider's web. His powerlessness culminates in the eastern province of Khorasan, where the commercial monopoly of Russia has already been mentioned, and which is fast becoming a Russian mediatised state. The Khans of Bujnurd, Kuchan, Dereguez, and Kelat wear Russian clothes and learn the Russian language. Presents are freely distributed among them by the Russian authorities in Transcaspia, and Russian brandy and arrack complete

the dissolvent process. Russian agents are scattered through all the important towns. A Russian Consul-General with a Cossack escort dominates Meshed. In the country districts the Russians have earned popularity by putting a successful stop to the Turkoman raids by which the miserable native peasantry was formally harassed and decimated; while their administration, with its astute exemptions for native peoples, would be preferred by many to the imbecile depravity of Persian rule. As long ago as 1875 Sir Charles MacGregor reported in his journey through the country that the people were longing for the Russians to come; and later on a petition to the Czar is said to have been circulated and extensively signed among the towns and villages of Khorasan, praying for incorporation.

Russian ascendency and Persian weakness

Not satisfied with an ascendency apparently so well secured, Russia, in response to the challenge thrown down by Great Britain in the matter of the Karun River concession in the South, has recently been giving a few more turns to the diplomatic screw in the North. The concessions demanded by Prince Dolgorouki, and rumoured to have been partially conceded by the Shah, include a Russian monopoly of railway construction in Persia, the completion of the *chaussée* before spoken of between Askabad and Meshed, the opening up to Russian navigation of the Enzeli lagoon, and the construction of a high road from Resht to Teheran. The demand of a railway concession has an importance that will presently be seen. The two concluding stipulations mean the

conversion of the Enzeli lagoon, which is the maritime approach to Resht, into a Russian harbour, and of Resht itself into a Russian town; and, as a consequence of this fact and of the improved communications with the capital, the final Russification of Teheran. There is not either in the Persian sovereign, in the Persian administration, in the Persian army, or in the Persian people, any material capable of opposing a prolonged resistance to these or any demands that Russia may choose by threats to enforce. The Shah, whatever he may feel, and he probably feels bitterly, cannot act. The administration is utterly rotten and corrupt. The only valuable portion of the army, consisting of the so-called Cossack regiments at Teheran—*i.e.* Persians trained, drilled, and equipped upon the Russian model, and commanded by Russian officers—is an instrument in Russia's hands. No unity or national spirit exists in the country. A distinguished foreign diplomat is said to have once remarked, after a long Persian experience: '*C'est le dernier des pays et le dernier des peuples.*'

Real aim of Russian policy in Persia

What, however, it may be asked, is the significance, and wherein, if at all, lies the danger of Russian ascendency in Northern Persia and Khorasan? This question I will answer. I have already pointed out the serious and irremediable loss inflicted thereby upon British trade; and it is in Persia that the commercial rivalry between Russia and Great Britain is at present a factor of more momentous operation than in any other part of the East. But Russian statesmanship,

here as elsewhere, has a political and strategical as well as a fiscal aim. Just as the control of N. and N.W. Persia supplies a base against Armenia and the frontier provinces of Turkey in Asia Minor, so the absorption of N.E. Persia and Khorasan will provide an alternative route of advance, either upon Herat or, through Seistan, upon Beluchistan and India itself. With Khorasan a Russianised province, there will be no need to violate any Anglo-Afghan frontier; the resources of that fertile country will furnish the requisite supplies; Herat may either be approached from the west or for a while may be left severely alone; the Khojak and Quetta may be coolly disregarded; and the newly-fortified British frontier in Pishin may even find itself turned from the west. Such is a more than possible evolution, in the near future, of Russian policy in Central Asia.

An eye upon the Persian Gulf

But there is greater mischief than the prospective overland danger to India lurking in the conception. Russia, hampered in warfare by being mainly a land power, has long been on the search for a new seaboard, and has directed covetous eyes upon the Persian Gulf. The acquisition of North Persia and Khorasan is only preliminary to a southerly move towards the Straits of Ormuz or the Indian Ocean. Now, therefore, appears in all its significance the demand for a railway concession throughout Persia, as the obvious and necessary means of effecting that advance. Of Russian supremacy in North Persia, I do not think that Englishmen, having foolishly allowed the prize to slip from their grasp long years ago, have much

right to complain, though with it they are fully entitled and ought to compete. But Russia at Ispahan, Shiraz, and Bushire, Russia on the Persian Gulf with a seaport, a naval dockyard and a fleet, is a very different thing. The commercial argument, weighty before, is even more weighty here; for at present England enjoys almost a monopoly, and that a highly lucrative monopoly, of the import trade with Southern Persia. But, again, the political and strategical arguments are stronger still. Are we prepared to surrender the control of the Persian Gulf and to divide that of the Indian Ocean? Are we prepared to make the construction of the Euphrates Valley Railway, or of some kindred scheme of the future, an impossibility for England and an ultimate certainty for Russia? Is Bagdad to become a new Russian capital in the South? Lastly, are we content to see a naval station within a few days' sail of Kurrachi, and to contemplate a hostile squadron battering Bombay?

British policy in rejoinder

I do not think there can be two opinions among Englishmen that there is no justification, either in policy or in reason, for exposing India to such a danger, or for allowing South Persia to fall into Russian hands. But, it may be asked, how can such a consummation be prevented? It can be prevented only by Great Britain undertaking the task herself, with no view to territorial annexation or increase of administrative responsibility, but with sole regard to the maintenance in South Persia of British as against Russian commercial and political interests. In other

words, the railways into South Persia that Russia aspires to lay in the future should be laid beforehand by Great Britain. Russian ascendency in the North should be balanced by British ascendency in the South. There is no need to speak of a territorial partition of Persia, because I imagine that neither Power desires such an issue or would welcome so serious an increase to its burdens. A partition of control and influence in Persia is a different thing; and, with a decrepit people and an expiring *régime*, is inevitable in the future.

Among possible schemes of railway construction in South Persia, the opening up of Seistan by such means is in the first rank of importance. Midway between Khorasan and the sea, this valuable frontier province of Persia, susceptible of great agricultural development, richly supplied with resources of water now wasted or unused, and possessing abundant relics of decayed prosperity, invites amelioration. Now a desert, it might by the construction of canals be converted into a garden, and by the provision of trade outlets become a treasure-house of natural wealth. In Persian hands no such destiny is possible, for the capital, the impulse, and the energy are alike wanting. Seistan, it is safe to assert, will only resume its former state by foreign aid. Its position in the map, almost due west of the British position in Pishin, and contiguous to British Beluchistan, indicates the natural means of communication and avenue of approach. The British railway to and beyond Quetta supplies an already existing starting-point for such a link of

connection, which might be effected either by a branch from Darwaza, at the head of the Quetta valley, or from Gulistan, at the base of the Amran range, to Nushki, and thence to Nasirabad and Lash Juwain; or, as suggested by others, the Kandahar extension, when completed, might be still further extended to Girishk, whence, from a more northerly direction, the same objective could easily be attained. In neither case do physical obstacles worth consideration intervene.

Effects of a Seistan railway

Such a railway would be essentially a commercial, and not a strategical undertaking, inasmuch as it would not merely open up Seistan, but would provide a southern way of entry into Khorasan itself, which would be brought into nearer communication with the Indian Ocean. At the same time its execution might act as a deterrent to any Russian operations against Herat, and would effectually checkmate the flank movement against Beluchistan, which I just now described. Of all the possible suggestions for counteracting Russian menace to India by pacific and honourable means, the construction of such a railway is at once the least aggressive, the cheapest, and the most profitable. Connection with the seaboard might be effected later on by a southerly branch to Gwadur, on the Indian Ocean, or to Bender Abbas, on the Persian Gulf. Looking still further into the future, we may contemplate as feasible an extension of the railway system, thus inaugurated, through South Persia *vid* Kirman and Yezd to Ispahan, Shiraz, and Bushire; in which direction a junction

would naturally be effected with the commercial routes opened up by the Karun River concession, to which it would constitute the appropriate corollary. The policy thus recommended is not difficult, and would in time be enormously remunerative. It involves no offence, and would be the salvation of Southern Persia. There is not the slightest reason why it should not be carried out, if the consent of the Shah were forthcoming; and powerless though he be in the clutch of Russia in the north, I am unable to see why, in a matter affecting the southern portion of his dominions, with which Russia can profess no straightforward or legitimate concern, Prince Dolgorouki should be the sole custodian of the royal ear.

Summary of this chapter

In bringing this chapter to a close, I am conscious of having covered a wide area, from the Pamir to Persia, and of having inadequately touched upon many important topics. My object, however, has been, to the best of my ability, to expose the present character and dimensions of the Anglo-Russian problem, nowhere, so far as I know, discussed in its entirety; to supply the material for a horoscope of the future by a careful examination of the antecedents, the position, the designs, the advantages, and also the drawbacks, of both parties in the possible struggle, and to indicate to my readers some of the precautionary measures by which that struggle may either be averted, or, if not averted, may be contemplated by this country without apprehension.

CHAPTER X.

RUSSIAN RULE IN CENTRAL ASIA

Not but wut abstract war is horrid—
I sign to thet with all my heart;
But civlysation does git forrid
Sometimes upon a powder cart.

J. R. LOWELL, *The Biglow Papers.*

Merits and demerits of Russian rule—Abolition of raids and gift of security—Russian power firmly established—Its causes—Memory of slaughter—Overpowering military strength of Russia—Certainty that she will not retreat—Popularity of Russia—*Laissez-faire* attitude—Treatment of native chiefs—Conciliation of native peoples—Defects of Russian character—Low civilisation—Attitude towards Mahometan religion—Towards native education—Bravery and endurance of Russian character—Military ease of Russian advance—Contrast between English and Russian facilities—Comparative security of dominions—Seamy side of Russian civilisation—Bad roads—General conclusions as to Russian government—Schemes for regeneration of the country—Irrigation—Diversion of the Oxus to its old bed—Cotton plantation—Sericulture and viticulture—Colonisation—Attitude of Great Britain—Responsibilities of Russia.

Merits and demerits of Russian rule

FROM a discussion of the rival interests of England and Russia in Central Asia, I proceed, in conclusion, to give some account of the strength, and if anywhere it be so, of the weakness of Russian rule. No possibility of future collision, no fear of ultimate conflict, need deter an Englishman from an honest recognition of national merit, or of services rendered to the cause of humanity. In a sphere distinct, and yet not alien,

from that in which Great Britain has herself achieved many successes and perpetrated some failures, friendly criticism is permissible, while jealousy is absurd.

Abolition of raids and gift of security

First, then, it cannot be doubted that Russia has conferred great and substantial advantages upon the Central Asian regions which she has reduced to her sway. Those who have read descriptions of the state of the country from the Caspian to the Amu Daria, in the pre-Russian days of rapine and raid, when agriculture was devastated, life and property rendered insecure, and entire populations were swept off under circumstances of unheard-of barbarity into a life-long servitude, can form some idea of the extent of the revolution by which peace and order and returning prosperity have been given to these desolated tracts; and the traveller, who once dared not move abroad without a powerful escort, is enabled to wander with impunity over the unfrequented plain. The experiences of Vambéry, of MacGregor, of Valentine Baker, and of every English voyager in or near the Turkoman country, contrasted with my own modest narrative, illustrate the immensity of the boon. At a comparatively recent date the members of the Boundary Commission reported that, till within three or four years before their visit, Turkoman marauders used to scour the country as far as Farrah, 150 miles south of Herat, that between Sarakhs and Kuhsan the land was utterly depopulated, and that raiding-parties were pushed to the very walls of Meshed.[1]

[1] Vide Captain A. C. Yate's *Travels with the Afghan Boundary Commission*, pp. 150–159.

Except among the Persian Turkomans of the Atrek border, the *alaman* may be said now to be a thing of the past.

Let me quote here the words of Sir Henry Rawlinson on the subject, spoken at a meeting of the Royal Geographical Society in 1882 :—

> No one will question but that the extension of Russian arms to the east of the Caspian has been of immense benefit to the country. The substitution, indeed, of Russian rule for that of the Kirghiz, Uzbegs, and Turkomans throughout a large portion of Central Asia has been an unmixed blessing to humanity. The execrable slave trade, with its concomitant horrors, has been abolished, brigandage has been suppressed, and Mahometan fanaticism and cruelty have been generally mitigated and controlled. Commerce at the same time has been rendered more secure, local arts and manufactures have been encouraged, and the wants of the inhabitants have been everywhere more seriously regarded than is usual under Asiatic rulers.

This is at once a significant and a handsome admission, coming, as it does, from one whom Russian writers are never tired of representing as choregus of the choir of English Russophobes and Jingoes. Voyaging through the country myself, and seeing on all sides the mouldering fortalices and towers that spoke so eloquently of the savage tenure of the past, I could not repress a feeling of gratitude to those who had substituted peace for chronic warfare, and order for barbaric anarchy. The desolation from which the land still suffers is the product of natural causes, whose operation may be checked but cannot be altogether reversed; and not of human passions,

which were so long and ruthlessly devoted to making still more terrible the terrors of the desert. If we still meet with but a scanty population, if the towns are more like villages, and the villages like clusters of hovels, and if civilisation is still in an embryonic stage, let us remember that it is only a decade since there was neither sedentary population, nor town, nor civilisation; and that thus a land is being slowly won to the service of man which man himself has hitherto rendered a byword and a curse. The Russian eagle may at first have alighted upon the eastern shores of the Caspian with murderous beak and sharpened talons, but, her appetite once satisfied, she has shown that she also came with healing in her wings.

Russian power firmly established. Its causes

Turning to the dominion of Russia and the means by which it is assured, I make with equal pleasure the acknowledgment that it appeared to me to be firmly and fairly established, and to be loyally accepted by the conquered races. Though we hear a good deal in books of the fanaticism of Mussulman populations, and might expect still more from the resentment of deposed authority, or the revenge of baffled licence, revolts do not occur and mutinies are not apprehended among the subjugated peoples. I attribute this to several reasons: to the ferocious severity of the original blow; to the powerlessness of resistance against the tight military grip that is kept by Russia upon the country; and to the certainty, which a long course of Russian conduct has reasonably inspired, that she will never retreat. A few words about each of these.

Memory of slaughter

The terrifying effect of such a massacre as Geok Tepe survives for generations. The story is repeated from father to son, and from son to grandson, losing none of its horror in the process of lineal transmission. The ruined walls of the fortress remain to add a melancholy emphasis to the tale. Meanwhile, though the fathers were slain, the sons have grown up into contented citizenship. Several of the survivors stand high in the service of the conqueror. A new generation has heard with a shudder the tale of national downfall, but itself only remembers a later order, and can scarcely imagine a time when the Ouroussi were not masters in the land.

Overpowering military strength of Russia

The second reason, viz. the overpowering military strength of Russia in the country, is even more cogent in its application, and must be held to detract somewhat from the brilliancy of her achievement. The proportion of soldiers to subjects in Transcaspia and Turkestan (figures of which, contrasted with those of British India, I gave in an earlier chapter) is such as to render any attempt at opposition a fiasco. Russian Central Asia is indeed one vast armed camp, and the traveller, who in the course of several weeks' journey scarcely sets eyes upon a Russian civilian, comes away with respect for the discretion, but without much surprise at the peaceful attitude, of the people. When the Russians boasted to me, as they habitually did, of their own popularity, contrasted with British odium in India, I could not help remembering that I had seen a great Indian city of 80,000 inhabitants, and a hotbed of idolatrous

superstition, held in peaceful control by four English civilians, without the aid of a single red-coat. I could not help recalling the lacs of rupees, amounting to hundreds of thousands of pounds sterling, spontaneously offered by Indian princes, in order that this very popularity, of which I now heard so much, might not be brought any nearer to their doors, but that the familiar odium might continue to be their lot. Nor could I forget Lord Dufferin's offer to the Punjabi chiefs, that their irregular troops should, under native command, but by the aid of British instruction, be turned into disciplined battalions, and presented with breechloading rifles and batteries of guns. Recalling these facts, and comparing them with what I saw in Transcaspia, I did not feel that the inequality was precisely what my Russian friends supposed.

Certainty that she will not retreat

A conviction of the permanence of Russia and of Russian conquests is a third and important element in explaining the bases of her power. A forward movement, whether voluntarily undertaken, or beneath the pressure of circumstances, is seldom repented of and never receded from.[1] No return tickets are issued to a punitive foray of Cossacks. Advance is inexorably followed by annexation. '*J'y suis, j'y reste*,' is the watchword of the Russian vanguard. There is no likelihood of 'making it so hot' for

[1] The case of Kulja, occupied by Russia in 1871, and restored to China in 1881, may seem, but is not, an exception, for its occupation was merely temporary and conditional; and, as a matter of fact, the pledge of retrocession was not redeemed by Russia without a substantial *quid pro quo*, the extortion of which all but led to war.

Russia that, for sake of peace, or economy, or men's lives, she will waver or fall back. A hornets' nest raised about her head is followed, not by a hasty withdrawal of the intruding member, but by a wholesale extermination of the insects. How different from the English method, which shrinks from annexation as from a spectre; which publishes to the world, including the guilty party, its chivalrous design of Retribution followed by Retreat, and which, instead of reaping from a frontier campaign the legitimate harvest of assured peace and good government in the future, leaves the smouldering embers of revenge in the ruins of burnt villages and desolated crops, certain, sooner or later, to burst out into a fresh conflagration!

Popularity of Russia

It would be unfair, however, both to Russian character and to Russian policy, to suggest that it is owing solely to prudential reasons that there is no visible antagonism to her sway. Such calculations may ensure its stability, but they do not explain its favour. I gladly, therefore, add the recognition that, so far as I was able to ascertain, Russian dominion is not merely accepted by, but is acceptable to the bulk of her Asiatic subjects, and that the ruling class, though feared, is also personally esteemed. Russia unquestionably possesses a remarkable gift for enlisting the allegiance and attracting even the friendship of those whom she has subdued by force of arms, a faculty which is to be attributed as much to the defects as to the excellences of her character. Let me first mention the latter.

The extreme frankness and amiability of Russian manners cover a genuine *bonhomie* and a good-humoured *insouciance*, which render it easy for them to make friends and which disarm the suspicion even of a beaten foe. The Russian fraternises in the true sense of the word. He is guiltless of that air of conscious superiority and gloomy hauteur, which does more to inflame animosity than cruelty may have done to kindle it, and he does not shrink from entering into social and domestic relations with alien or inferior races. His own unconquerable carelessness renders it easy for him to adopt a *laissez-faire* attitude towards others, and the tolerance with which he has treated the religious practices, the social customs, and the local prejudices of his Asiatic fellow-subjects is less the outcome of diplomatic calculation than it is of ingrained *nonchalance*.

Laissez faire attitude

A remarkable feature of the Russification of Central Asia is the employment given by the conqueror to her former opponents on the field of battle. I mentioned in an earlier chapter the spectacle of which I was a witness at Baku, where the four Khans of Merv were assembled in Russian uniform to greet the Czar. This is but a casual illustration of a method that Russia has consistently employed, and which is a branch of the larger theory of Massacre followed by Embraces that was so candidly avowed by Skobeleff. The chiefs are sent to St. Petersburg to excite their wonderment, and are covered with decorations to gratify their vanity. When they come back they are confirmed in their posts or offices, and are presently

Treatment of native chiefs

rewarded with an increased prerogative. Their small number is, of course, a reason why they may be so employed with impunity. The English have never shown a capacity to avail themselves of the services of their former enemies on a similar scale. I remember reading only a short time ago an account given by an old Boer of the British annexation of the Transvaal, and the troubles, culminating in Majuba Hill, that ensued. His explanation of the discontent and rebellion was a very simple one, and probably contained a good deal of truth. 'If you had made *maaters* (chums),' he said, 'with Oom Paul (Kruger), and a few others of our leading men, and given them posts, and if you had listened a little to them, and had not been so terribly *hoogmoedaag* (high and mighty), all would have gone well.' The 'high and mighty' policy has been at the root of a good many English failures, just as its converse has been responsible for a good many Russian successes.

Conciliation of native peoples

With the followers a not less successful policy is adopted than towards the chiefs. As soon as fighting is over they are invited back to their homesteads, and to the security of undisputed possession tempered by a moderate taxation. The peasant is satisfied, because, under more scientific management, he gets so many cubic feet more water from his canals and so many bushels more grain from his land. The merchant is pleased, because he sells his wool or his cotton at a bigger price than it realised before. All are amenable to the comfort and utility and cheapness of Russian manufactured articles, in contrast with the clumsy

and primitive furniture of their previous lives. Above all, security is a boon which none can depreciate; and if the extinction of the *alaman* is a cause of regret to a few scores or hundreds, it is an unmixed blessing to thousands. Russian authority presents itself to the native populations in the twofold guise of liberty and despotism: liberty, because in many respects they enjoy a freedom which they never knew before; despotism, centred in the image of the Great White Czar, which is an inalienable attribute of government to the Oriental mind.

We may trace indeed, in the panorama of Russian advance, a uniform procession of figures and succession of acts, implying something more than a merely adventitious series of events. First comes the Cossack, brave in combat and affable in occupation, at once the instrument of conquest and the guarantee of retention. Next follow the merchant and the pedlar, spreading out before astonished eyes the novel wares, the glittering gewgaws, and the cheap conveniences of Europe. A new and lucrative market is opened for native produce. Prompt payment in hard cash proves to be a seductive innovation. Presently appear the priest with his vestments and icons, conferring a divine benediction upon the newly established order; the *tchinovnik* and kindred symptoms of organised settlement; the liquor-shop and its *vodka*, to expedite, even while debasing, the assimilative process; the official and tax collector, as the final stamp of Imperial Supremacy. Then when a few years, or sometimes only months, have gone by, imposing barracks rise,

postal and telegraph offices are built, a railway is laid, colonists are invited, the old times are forgotten, and an air of drowsy quiescence settles down upon the spot that a decade before was scoured by predatory bands or precariously peopled by vagabond tribes.

Defects of Russian character. Low civilisation

On the other hand, the Russians have been aided in the work of pacification by qualities which, though discreditable to civilised peoples, are familiar by immemorial usage as well as by national instinct to Oriental tribes. To an unrefined race such as the latter a want of refinement is not shocking. To peoples with whom lying is no disgrace (*vide* Alikhanoff's description of the Turkomans, quoted in Chapter V.) untruthfulness presents no novelty. To a society trained in theft and dishonesty (*vide* O'Donovan's 'Merv Oasis,' *passim*) corruption is no crime. The conquest of Central Asia is a conquest of Orientals by Orientals, of cognate character by cognate character. It is the fusing of strong with weaker metal, but it is not the expulsion of an impure by a purer element. Civilised Europe has not marched forth to vanquish barbarian Asia. This is no nineteenth-century crusade of manners or morals; but barbarian Asia, after a sojourn in civilised Europe, returns upon its former footsteps to reclaim its own kith and kin. Assimilation is less remarkable when rulers are severed from subjects by a gap of but a few centuries, and when no impassable chasm of intellect or character intervenes. A system backward in Europe is forward in Central Asia; stagnation here is dizzy progress there; and coarser agencies are

better fitted for the work of redemption than a more polished instrument.

Attitude towards Mahometan religion

No more striking illustration of the policy of *laissez-faire*, of which I have spoken, can be given than the attitude which Russia has throughout adopted towards those institutions which are commonly the rallying-ground of prejudice and superstition among Mahometans, namely, the religion and the education of the native peoples. The former she has absolutely left alone. The Mullahs have been allowed to teach and preach the Koran; the dervishes alone have been restrained in their fanatical importunities; mosques have even, in some cases, been repaired by Russian means; and at one time the Government actually went so far as to build mosques itself for the conciliation of the Kirghiz. No Russian propaganda has been tolerated in Central Asia; proselytism is tabooed; and it is a curious but significant fact that we find Russian writers boasting that their Church has never despatched a missionary to Central Asia nor made an Asiatic convert. From one point of view this policy has had the most satisfactory results; for the bigotry, which persecution or even covert hostility might have sharpened, has sunk into an indifference which will pave the way to a more thorough political union. But how different is this system from that of the English Church, whose missionary activity is the wonder, if unfortunately it is not the redemption, of foreign lands, and which aspires to create converts almost before it has made citizens! There is this broad difference between the

problem which has confronted the two nations in Central Asia—that the Russians have so far come into contact with only one, and that a Monotheistic creed; while the English have found themselves plunged into a weltering sea of Pagan superstition and blind idolatry.

Towards native education

The contrast between the rival methods is nowhere more conspicuous than in the field of native education. If England has recognised a special and primary obligation in her dealings with conquered peoples it has always been in the education and development of the young. Indeed, her lavish distribution of the resources of culture and knowledge in India is the main cause of the difficulties with which her administration is now confronted. Wisdom is justified of her children, and those who have caught the glamour of nineteenth-century learning are not content to sink back into the slough of primordial ignorance. The Russians have proceeded upon very different lines. The educational habits and institutions of their Mussulman subjects have been left untouched. The *mektebs*, or primary schools, and the *medresses*, or high schools, still communicate their straitened and stinted learning, their senseless lessons by rote, and their palsied philosophy, to thousands of Russian subjects, whom not an effort is made to lift on to a higher plane of intellectual development. The Government does not even supervise the collection or distribution of the *vakufs*, or religious endowments; and large sums of money are annually left to the discretion of unlettered Mullahs and priests. That a

better era, however, is dawning, and that Russia is beginning to recognise her duties towards those with whose rule she is charged, may be gathered from the details which I quoted in an earlier chapter upon Tashkent.

Bravery and endurance of Russian character

Such, broadly speaking, have been the means by which Russia has gained her position, and having gained it, has made it secure: namely, overwhelming military superiority; a resolute policy; the gift of material advantages; equable and tolerant administration; personal popularity; and a calculating prudence. Let me add thereto that, in the process, the conquerors have exhibited qualities of a very high order, commanding respect and admiration. The Russian soldier is perhaps the most faithful modern parallel to the Spartan. He would let the wolf tear at his vitals without uttering a groan. Endued with great hardihood and power of self-sacrifice, possessed of a blind but inspiring devotion to duty, he takes his orders silently and executes them promptly. The child of a Northern and Arctic clime, he serves without a murmur in fervid deserts and under excruciating suns. Encamped in the wilderness, he builds huts and houses that recall memories of home, and with singing and merriment he peoples the solitude with cheerful fancies. Above all, he is animated by a lofty pride of birth, and by an unfaltering faith in the destiny of his country. It is of such stuff that heroes and great nations alike are made, and by such hands that empires have commonly been built.

Other considerations, however, there are which

Military ease of Russian advance

must also be taken into view. Apart from difficulties arising from the nature and climate of the country, it cannot be contended that, in their career of Central Asian conquest, the Russians have been confronted with any very formidable obstacles. The only two critical military operations in which they have been engaged were the native attempt to recapture the citadel of Samarkand in 1868, after Kaufmann had marched away in pursuit of the Bokharan army, leaving only a small garrison behind; and the siege of Geok Tepe. The former was a heroic performance; the latter was, to some extent, an artificial success; for Skobeleff's one fear, based on a wide knowledge of Oriental adversaries, was lest the Turkomans should escape him by flight, before he could administer the necessary lesson. As it was, the siege reflected at least as much credit upon the Tekkes as it did upon the Russians; for the former, with no guns, and only inferior rifles, exposed to a murderous artillery fire behind the worst possible defence in the world—viz. a walled enclosure in a level plain, with higher ground in the possession of the enemy—exhibited a gallantry beyond praise. The earlier fights with Kirghiz, Khokandians, and Bokhariots were mostly 'walks over,' and must ordinarily have degenerated into a rout almost from the start, if the ludicrous disproportion of slain, returned in the Russian official reports of the engagements, be accepted as true. So far the Russians in their advance have not met one genuinely warlike people or fought one serious battle. Their prodigious pres-

tige has had the effect of Joshua's trumpets before the walls of Jericho. No one knew this better than Skobeleff, who told an amusing story of the capture of Ura Tepe by Romanovski in 1866. When the *aksakals* (grey-beards) of the town were brought before the Russian commander they kept asking: 'But where are the giants that breathed out fire?' Romanovski discreetly answered that he had sent the giants back to Russia, but would recall them at the first necessity.

Contrast between English and Russian facilities

This is one among many contrasts between Russian and British conquests in Asia. England only won India after terrific battles, and only holds it by the allegiance of warlike peoples. Indeed, she is far safer in the masculine hands of Sikhs and Mahrattas and Rajputs, than among her tenderly reared nurseries of hot-house Babus. Great, however, as was the task set before England in comparison with Russia, in acquisition, still greater is the strain of retention. The English are thousands of miles from home, and are severed therefrom by continents and oceans. The Russians are still in Russia. From St. Petersburg to Tashkent, or from Odessa to Merv, a Russian never leaves Russian soil; he is still in the fatherland, speaking the same language and observing the same customs. The expansion of Russia is the natural growth of the parent stem, whose stately circumference swells larger and larger each year. The expansion of England is the throwing out of a majestic branch which exhausts and may even ultimately break off from the maternal trunk. Or,

to adopt another metaphor, Russia, in unrolling the skein of her destiny, keeps one end of it fast held in her own hand, and is in unbroken connection with the other extremity. England has divided her skein into a multitude of threads, and has scattered them broadcast over the globe. In Central Asia the Russians are residents as well as rulers. In India the English are a relief band of occupants, leaseholders of a twenty years' term, yearning for the expiration of their contract, and for the ship that will bear them home. In Turkestan and Transcaspia Russians are more obvious to the naked eye than are their subjects, and, as I have said, Russian soldiers are far more obvious than Russian civilians. In India the English are swallowed up in a mighty ocean of humanity. You may travel for days, if at any distance from the railway, and never catch sight of a white man; and your *rara avis* when you find him will not have scarlet plumage.

Comparative security of dominions

A further contrast is presented by the relative security or insecurity of the two dominions. Many and different enemies have it in their power to wreak mischief upon India. With an extensive and for the most part defenceless seaboard, she is exposed to hostile navies. Her commerce finds a hundred different outlets, not one of which is safe from attack. Upon the north and north-west she is galled and worried by the stings of fanatical tribes. Russia alone can drive her into a ferment by moving a single *sotnia* of Cossacks a few furlongs. On the other hand, the Russian Empire in Central Asia is im-

pregnable. Every avenue of approach is in her own hands; there is no enemy at her gates. No Armada can threaten where there are no seas; no hostile army can operate at such a gigantic distance from its base. England can do her no positive injury. Her commerce is overland and cannot be touched; her communications are secure and cannot be severed. We have no interest in further advance. Our hands are full. Russia is growing and spreading, is headstrong and young; and rash fingers are never wanting to beckon her on. Aggression may be sense for her; it is folly for us. The utmost we hope for is to arrest her before the Rubicon of our honour is reached; the least we desire is to provoke her to plunge into the stream.

Seamy side of Russian civilisation

I have indicated the brighter and redeeming features of Russian civilisation in Central Asia. There is a seamy side as well. Drunkenness and gambling and prostitution have followed, as is their habit, in the wake of Western morals and culture. At so great a distance from headquarters, and where the only avenue of distinction is presented by the public service, there is great jealousy and constant intrigue among officers and functionaries. Independence encourages self-seeking and arrogance, and there are plenty of hands ready to pull the successful performer down. Every prominent actor in Central Asian politics has a host of enemies, and is fought about like a theological dogma by opposite schools. General Annenkoff, for instance, is upheld by a *clientèle* of staunch partisans, but is not less sturdily denounced

by an opposition clique. For a time one of the hostile camp, General Bazoff by name, was placed in managing control of the earlier section of the Transcaspian Railway. The result was incessant squabbling between the two men; and to such a pitch was the ill-feeling carried that, at the opening ceremonies, when the rails had been temporarily washed away by a torrent near Kizil Arvat, Bazoff did all in his power to incommode and retard the progress of Annenkoff's guests. M. de Cholet also relates that in the frontier districts, at a distance from the central authority, peculation and corruption are rife. The *Pristavs*, or chiefs of centres, defraud the Government by appropriating part of the taxes, detection being difficult in the absence of a regular census.[1]

Bad roads

In the humbler details of local administration, in such matters as roads, means of communication, and the like—the very province in which the English excel—the Russians are incurably languid and idle. The roads of Central Asia, even the postal roads and main lines of connection, have long been famous for their execrable badness. Skobeleff, in a letter in 1877, on his way from Central Asia to take part in the Turkish war, wrote that, 'if known to Dante, the Central Asian roads would have served as an additional horror to hell.' And yet, dating his letter from Kazalinsk, he was travelling upon and was speaking of the main postal route from Tashkent to Orenburg. Samarkand, Tashkent, and Askabad were the only places where I saw tolerable roads. Else-

[1] *Voyage en Turkestan*, p. 103.

where they are merely cart-tracks, unmetalled, full of ruts and holes, and deeply buried in dust. Upon the Afghan frontier there are practically no roads at all; though it is approached by two, of Russian construction, from Karibent to Sarakhs, and from Merv to Takhta-Bazar.

General conclusions as to Russian government

The information which I have given about Russian policy in the wider spheres of education, manners, religion, and morals, will have prepared my readers for the conclusion that, while the Russian system may fairly be described as one of government, it cannot be described as one, to any considerable extent, of improvement or of civilisation. There seems to be altogether lacking that moral impulse which induces unselfish or Christian exertion on behalf of a subject people. Broad and statesmanlike schemes for the material development of the country, for the amelioration of the condition of the natives, for their adaptation to a higher order of things, are either not entertained, or are crushed out of existence by the superior exigencies of a military *régime*. Barracks, forts, military roads, railway stations, post and telegraph offices, the necessary adjuncts of government, abound; but the institutions or buildings that bespeak a people's progress have yet to appear. Hence while there may exist the tranquillity arising from peaceful and conciliatory combination, there is not the harmony that can result only from final coalescence. It is, of course, true, as I have frequently reminded my readers, that Russia has only too recently entered into possession for any very marked results to be as

yet visible; while the opportunities afforded among a nomad or agricultural people, where there are few cities and no national life, are necessarily small. Enough has been done in the matter of pacification and consolidation to excite our respect. But in Turkestan a twenty years' tilth and seed time might be expected to have produced a more bountiful harvest; and the doubt is suggested whether the Russians, though they may have the ability to conquer and the strength to keep, have the genius to build a new fabric out of old materials.

Schemes for regeneration of the country

Attention must, however, in all fairness, be drawn to the schemes of improvement now in course of execution, or of attempted execution, and to which casual reference has more than once been made. These include irrigation, plantation, and colonisation on a large scale. But in each case it must be premised that the plans exist, so far, in greater completeness upon paper than anywhere else; and, accordingly, the account I give of them represents their genesis in the brain of the reformer, rather than their positive realisation in fact. Later travellers may perhaps report the successful filling in of the somewhat grandiose outlines.

Irrigation

I have described the schemes in course of execution for the improved irrigation of the Merv oasis; and have indicated how, by a more scientific economy of the existing water-supply, by the construction of reservoirs in the Persian mountains to store a sudden and unpremeditated rainfall, as well as of conduits and watercourses to conduct it to the plains, the oases of Akhal and Atek

may be expected to enlarge their cultivable area. More ambitious schemes have, however, been talked about. The project has been mooted of uniting the streams of the Murghab and the Tejend, and even of utilising their surplus resources in order to reclaim a portion of the Kara Kum. Those, however, who are best acquainted with the country, and speak from a practical knowledge of engineering, deny the feasibility of such a consummation, for the simple reason that the surplus postulated does not exist. In summer the river-beds are sometimes quite dry; and although water is undoubtedly wasted by the clumsy methods of the Turkomans, yet sufficient cannot be spared to undertake reclamation beyond the existing limits of the oases; and as the population increases, which, under pacific rule, it rapidly will, every available drop will be required upon the spot. Moreover, the diversion of water into new channels through so inveterate a wilderness is apt to turn out a very disappointing enterprise, owing to the rapid atmospheric evaporation, and to the thirsty appetite of the sands.

Diversion of the Oxus to its old bed

Much the same objection exists, but on a far larger scale, to the schemes, of which a great deal was heard at one time, for a restoration of the Oxus to its old bed, diverging from the present main stream in the neighbourhood of Khiva towards the Sary Kamish lakes in the Ust Urt desert,[1] and thence

[1] Above the Sary Kamish lakes there are no less than four old beds of the Oxus: (1) the oldest, or Unguz, beginning eighty miles below Tcharjui, and running parallel with the modern Amu Daria to

by the dried-up Uzboi bed, to the Igdi wells and the Balkan Bay in the Caspian. This idea is as old as the time of Peter the Great, who sent an envoy to examine the former channel, and to report upon the feasibility of the project, with a view to opening up a new waterway into the heart of Asia. The construction of the Transcaspian Railway has to a great extent obviated the present necessity for such an undertaking; while exhaustive scientific surveys have simultaneously demonstrated its practical infeasibility, or, at any rate, the unremunerative outlay of the experiment. Herr Kiepert's famous and scornful criticism of the project, when at the height of its favour, as 'the great Central Asian Sea-serpent,' though bitterly resented at the time, has apparently survived to witness its own justification. The difference of levels between the Sary Kamish lakes and the Caspian is so great that it is calculated that forty years would be spent in filling the former before the idea could be entertained of taking the overflow into the Caspian. General Gloukhovskoe himself, who is understood to be favourable to the scheme, has estimated the cost

Fort Kabakli, and thence westwards to the Sheikh wells; (2) a channel leaving the Amu Daria near Khazarasp, passing by Khiva and running to the wells of Charishli on the Uzboi; variously known throughout its length as Zeikyash, Yaman Kagikyal, and Tonu or Sonu Daria; (3) the Doudan, starting a little to the east of the town of Khanki, and running by the hill of Man Kir and through the lakes of Tunukla to the south-east corner of the Sary Kamish lakes; (4) the Darialik, beginning five miles west of Kunia Urgenj, and falling into the Sary Kamish lakes at their north-east corner. Vide Grodekoff's *War in Turkomania*, vol. i. chap. i. Colonel Petrusevitch, who surveyed the last-named bed, demonstrated the possibility of utilising it as far as the Sary Kamish lakes, water having flowed through it thus far, when the Amu Daria burst its banks in 1878.

of its undertaking at four millions sterling. A further danger is the desiccation that might be entailed upon Khiva and the Amu Daria province on the right bank of the river, one of the most fertile portions of the Russian dominions. It is improbable, therefore, unless the Oxus repeats its perambulatory humours of the past, which it shows no immediate likelihood of doing, that any artificial attempt to alter its direction will be made in our time.

Cotton plantation

Plantation has been resorted to in many parts, as allusions in previous chapters have shown, in the interest both of improved fertilisation of the soil, and an increase of moisture in the climate. The branch of industry, however, from which Russia, with probable justice, expects the greatest return, is that of cotton plantation, which, after a long apathy, is (if official reports are to be relied upon) being vigorously pursued both on the banks of the Amu Daria and in Turkestan. American seed has been imported into the country; American scientific methods and appliances have been studied; and in observance of the commercial policy which I have more than once sketched, an American company that applied for a concession met with a peremptory refusal, the Russians intending to keep an absolute monopoly of the industry, both growth and export, in their own hands. General Annenkoff, in the paper on the Commercial Importance of the Transcaspian Railway, from which I have before quoted, gave the figures of the present produce of cotton in Central Asia as follows:—

Bokhara	2,000,000	pouds[1]
Khiva	500,000	„
Khokand	300,000	„
Amu Daria	500,000	„
Total	3,300,000	„

and those of the exports of cotton *viâ* Orenburg before the construction of the railway as—

1883	603,000	pouds
1884	626,000	„
1885	668,000	„

The book which he is understood to be about to publish upon the railway will no doubt contain more recent statistics. So far the fertility of the Central Asian cotton-seed has not been developed to anything like the same extent as its American rival. One *poud* (36 lbs.) of the former in its impure state yields only 9 lbs. of pure material; while the corresponding amount of American seed produces 15 lbs. One *desiatine* (*i.e.* 2½ acres) of land in Central Asia will give from 12 to 14 *pouds* of pure cotton; the same area in America will give from 22 to 30. The present annual requirements of Russia are stated at about 8,000,000 *pouds* of cotton, which she imports from Egypt, India, and America, at an average price of 11 roubles (22*s.*) a *poud*. General Annenkoff, as I have previously mentioned, claims to be able to offer his railroad-borne cotton from Central Asia in the market of Moscow at 6½ roubles a *poud*. With the united supply of Merv, Bokhara, Ferghana, and Khokand, Russia expects to be entirely self-supporting in another decade.

Of the rapid extension of the industry in Central

[1] 1 *poud* = 36 English lbs.; 62 *pouds* = 1 ton.

Asia, the following figures will give some idea. In 1884, only 750 acres in Turkestan were devoted to the plantation of American cotton. In 1886 the area was 30,000 acres, and for the first time an annual meeting of planters was held at Tashkent. In 1886 the export from Central Asia, mainly by the Transcaspian Railway, though at that time carried no further than Merv, was 55,000 bales of 100 kilogrammes (220 lbs.) each. In 1887 the total was reckoned at 120,000–200,000 such bales; in 1888 the area under cultivation was 87,500 acres in Turkestan, and the total export was 521,000 bales, made up as follows:—

Bokhara	122,000 bales
Khiva	57,000 „
Tashkent	180,000 „
Persia	81,000 „
Erivan	81,000 „
Total	521,000 „

From the latest report (for 1888) of the trade of St. Petersburg and Consular District, I derive the following:—

The consumption in Russia of cotton grown in Bokhara, Khiva, and Khokand is steadily increasing; although as at present produced, the great bulk of these cottons is not suitable for spinning the finer number of yarn most in demand. The staple, as a rule, is both short and irregular, the fibre rather dry and weak, and the cotton imperfectly cleaned.[1]

Sericulture and viticulture

Among other industries pursued or attempted on a considerable scale, and susceptible of great expan-

[1] No. 564 of the Annual Series of Foreign Office Reports, 1889.

sion, in the Central Asian dominions of Russia, are the production of silk and of wine, and the growth of rice. Out of 800,000*l.* worth of raw silk, and 200,000*l.* worth of spun silk, annually consumed by Russia, only from 30,000*l.* to 60,000*l.* worth come from Central Asia; and there is therefore an excellent opening for enlarged production. During the last few years, however, the industry, owing to the widespread existence of disease among the silkworms, has been on the decline; the returns of the market of Khojent showing a fall from 30,000 *pouds* of cocoons sold in 1885 for 30,000*l.*, to 4,000 *pouds* sold in 1888 for 5,000*l.* Establishments have been founded for the examination of the eggs, with a view to the eradication of the disease; and fresh supplies of eggs are now being imported from other silk-growing countries. The culture of the vine is largely practised, under the most favourable conditions of soil and climate, by the natives, who manufacture a very superior beverage. With due care and with improved methods, Turkestan may be made to supply the entire needs in this respect of Siberia, as well as of Central Asia. Of rice, though a great deal is grown, none has till lately been exported to European Russia. But the Transcaspian Railway will now encourage the growth by facilitating the exportation.

Colonisation

Lastly I come to the Russian projects of colonisation, which again look exceedingly well on paper, but as regards fulfilment are as yet very much in the air. The banks of the Amu Daria and the Oasis of Merv are the regions to which the emigrant is specially

invited; and quite recently General Annenkoff, in a lecture before the Imperial Geographical Society of St. Petersburg, drew a pretty comparison between the settlements on the Yellow China River, and the future Russian colonies on the Oxus. There is this fundamental difference between the two, that the Chinese colonists are Chinamen, while the Russian colonists are to be Russian, or, in other words, that the one are indigenous, while the others will be aliens. It cannot be said that the Russians have anywhere in Asia as yet attained much success as colonists. In the Syr Daria district they commenced the experiment in 1875 of the free settling of peasants, the planting of Crown colonies at fixed points having already proved a complete failure. A few villages were founded in the ensuing years; but until 1884 the progress was very slow. In 1885 there were reported to be eight peasant settlements, and four colonies of German Memnonites, with 514 families, and about 2,500 persons. In 1886 six more Russian villages were established, with 324 families, extending over the two neighbouring districts. These are the latest procurable figures.

The very taste for nomad life which their constant migrations have shown really disqualifies the Russians for the sedentary and laborious existence of the settler. Whole communities will roam away from home upon the slightest pretext, or upon the breath of some faint rumour touching the rich gardens of Turkestan or the prolific harvests of Merv. A story is related of a well-to-do colonist who wandered south from Siberia,

abandoning an excellent farm, simply because he had heard that a certain weed, by which his holding was troubled, ceased to grow beyond a particular limit. The Government of the Steppe to the north-east of Turkestan, and more especially the province of Semirechinsk, or the Land of the Seven Streams, have hitherto been the chief scene of Russian colonisation. In the latter, where the process commenced in 1854, there are said to be over 30,000 colonists. But the emigrants, who were mainly Cossacks of rude habits and unsettled life (the Russian Minister of Agriculture described them in a report as a coarse and almost savage band, addicted to idleness, intoxication, theft, and vice), or peasants from Siberia, driven southwards by the cold, appear to have been thoroughly unsatisfactory; while Chinese competition from the neighbouring province of Ili and from Chinese Turkestan, particularly that of the Dungans or Chinese Mahometans, and Taranchis or Turki Mahometans, has proved a serious hindrance. The natives, who, like all Chinamen, consume less food and work for less wages than any other people in the world, lower the price of agricultural produce, and derive a further advantage from their intimate knowledge of the local systems of irrigation. Disgust overtakes the discomfited European; he packs up his goods and chattels, and becomes a vagrant once more. Further east, in the Russian province of Manchuria along the Amoor River, Chinese competition has proved so formidable that the Government has felt called upon to interfere. In the Pri-Amoorski district there were reported in

1888 to be 40,000 Asiatic aliens; in the Ussuri district 14,000. The Russian Governor-General in his last report included these words: 'The Manchurians form an element which is dangerous to the interests of our Russian colonists, as by their intelligence, industry, endurance, and frugality, competition of any foreign labour system whatever with theirs is prevented.' To restrict this influx and the consequent fall in prices, it was proposed that the Russian Government should lay a special capitation or income tax upon all Chinese and Koreans in Russian territory, and in the scheme of universal taxation should allow an exemption to naturalised Russian subjects and Russian traders.

These incidents will show that Russian colonisation in Central Asia is not such smooth sailing as might be expected; and that projects, however brave, may be widely removed from reality. General Annenkoff in his lecture recommended the following steps as the prelude to more successful ventures: improved and extended irrigation; the circulation of maps with spots adapted to settlement distinguished upon them; the institution of model farms and agricultural schools in order to create a supply of competent managers and overseers; and the collection of models of appliances used in America for the cultivation of cotton. Nevertheless there do not exist in Central Asia the insuperable obstacles of climate and surroundings that have rendered British colonies in India an impossibility, and have thereby deprived the English of this most potent instrument of assimilation;

and the Amu Daria fringe may one day be peopled with untidy long-haired *Moujiks*, and dotted over with pine-log huts.

Attitude of Great Britain

Such, so far as I have been able to ascertain them,[1] are Russia's position and prospects, her virtues and failings, in her recently acquired Central Asian dominions. Englishmen may regard her presence there with equanimity and watch her progress with friendly interest. They may compare her doings north of the Hindu Kush and Himalayas with their own to the south, and may perhaps derive some lessons, or imbibe some warnings from the contrast. They need grudge Russia none of her triumphs, nor be led, either by national jealousy or by possible antagonism in the future, into competition with her in a field which their own hands are too full to enter. Let no Englishman be found repeating the infatuated nonsense that has sometimes found its way into print in magazine articles, about turning Russia out of Central Asia, or sweeping her from the Khanates. She is not to be evicted; and of all peoples we are the last to supply the crowbar brigade. The limits to British dominions in Central Asia are fixed by natural conditions, which we should be insane to ignore or overleap, and which sever us, as by oceans, from Tartar prairies or Turkoman steppes. The inheritance of these lands, with their historic past, their sordid present,

[1] I have made repeated applications to Russian official quarters for further information, both in figures and in facts; but entirely without success. If the Russians are anywhere misrepresented or misunderstood in foreign countries, it is commonly their own fault; for they stupidly refuse the sole means of correction or substantiation.

and the mysterious possibilities of their future, has devolved upon a race yet young among nations, endowed with surpassing vitality, and destined to greatness. At least let us wish her God-speed in the undertaking.

Responsibilities of Russia

Let it be borne in mind, however, and by none more than the Russians themselves, that if the future of these regions is in their own hands, upon their shoulders rests a proportionate responsibility. So far everything has been easy enough. Armies have collapsed; the conquered have been pacified; opposition has vanished; order has been assured. The scarcely formulated ambitions of Peter the Great have been realised, and have been multiplied a hundredfold in the process of realisation. A new continent has been usurped, and a mighty empire has been won. But, as the Duke of Wellington remarked to Lord Auckland in 1839, 'In Asia, where victories cease difficulties begin.' Demolition has been simple; but a call for constructive ability is now made. Russia is required to build a new edifice upon the old foundations, to lift a people from the sloth of centuries, and to teach them the worth of manhood. The inveterate walkers in darkness have seen a great light. They are entitled to share the warmth of its illumination. Means of regeneration exist in abundance. A railway built for purposes of war ought in proper hands to become a security for peace. A few crumbling Khanates alone remain as an expiring relic of the past, which, with all its pageantry and its horrors, is shrivelling up like a parchment scroll beneath the

action of fire, and will only leave its charred remains as a memento for another generation. The field is clear, and no rival threatens. If Russian brains can only estimate the sense of duty, or even of ulterior profit, at a little higher price than ephemeral vainglory, and if Russian hands can desist from flying at the least breath of suspicion to the hilts of their swords, there is no reason why a future of beneficence and even of splendour should not await the Central Asian dominions of the Czar.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

TABLE OF STATIONS AND DISTANCES ON THE TRANSCASPIAN RAILWAY, 1889

Name of Station	Distance in Versts (two-thirds of a mile)
1. Uzun Ada	0
2. Michaelovsk	26
3. Molla Kari	48
4. Bala Ishem	82
5. Aidin	112
6. Pereval	127
7. Akcha Kuma	143
8. Kazanjik	174
9. Uzun Su	190
10. Ushak	213
11. Kizil Arvat	243
12. Kodj	270
13. Bahmi	294
14. Artchman	324
15. Suntcha	343
16. Bacharden	354
17. Kelata	381
18. Geok Tepe	406
19. Bezmein	428
20. Askabad	448
21. Gyaurs	480
22. Aksu	497

Name of Station	Distance in Versts (two-thirds of a mile)
23. Baba Durmaz	518
24. Artik	536
25. Kaakha	568
26. Arman Sagait	586
27. Dushak	607
28. Takir	627
29. Tejend	651
30. Geok Seour	673
31. Jujukli	698
32. Dort Kuyu	723
33. Karibata	746
34. Merv	770
35. Bairam Ali	796
36. Kurban Kala	813
37. Keltchi	831
38. Ravnina	853
39. Uch Adji	872
40. Peski	901
41. Repetek	931
42. Karaul Kuyu	954
43. Barchani	976
44. Tcharjui	989
45. Amu Daria	998
46. Farab	1,002
47. Kadji Devlet	1,023
48. Kara Kul	1,042
49. Yakatat	1,066
50. Murgak	1,084
51. Bokhara	1,107
52. Kuyu Mazar	1,131
53. Kizil Tepe	1,147
54. Malik	1,169
55. Kermine	1,193
56. Ziadin	1,217
57. Tugai Robat	1,242
58. Katta Kurgan	1,269
59. Nagornaya	1,293
60. Juma	1,319
61. Samarkand	1,343

APPENDIX II

TABLE OF DISTANCES IN CENTRAL ASIA

THE sources from which the following table has been compiled are scattered in a great number of works, and it may claim, I believe, to be the first published attempt of its kind. Where I have found conflicting computations of distance, an endeavour has been made to determine the more trustworthy estimate, though, in a country where routes are not clearly marked, and where space is measured, not by mile-posts, but by marches, absolute precision is scarcely to be procured. Where places are connected by rail, the distance has been reckoned by the line, and not by road. In the selection of cases for mention, any compiler must lay himself open to the charge of arbitrary choice. My object has been to give the figures of distance between such places as are likely to have an important bearing upon the future development of the Central Asian Question, more particularly such places as are on the main lines of Russian or British advance. I can certify, from my own experience, how seriously a student may be retarded in the effort to comprehend a strategical argument or position by the absence of such knowledge, and what a wonderful aid to understanding is the fortunate accident of its possession.

	Miles
Alexandretta to Grain (Persian Gulf)	920
Andkui to Balkh	100
„ Bosaga (Oxus)	60
„ Maimena	80
„ Maruchak	180
Askabad to Dushak	106
„ Herat	368
„ Khiva	280
„ Kuchan	70
„ Merv	215
„ Meshed	168

	Miles
Askabad to Sarakhs	198
Astrabad to Bujnurd	200
„ Herat	557
„ Kuchan	267
„ Meshed	347
„ Shahrud	60
Balkh to Bamian	220
„ Bosaga	80
„ Herat	370
„ Kabul	330
„ Kilif (Oxus)	50
Bokhara to Balkh	276
„ Karshi	86
„ Khiva (by steppe)	280
„ „ (*vid* Tcharjui)	330
„ Kilif	226
„ Maimena	350
„ Samarkand	150
„ Tcharjui	70
Dera Ghazi Khan to Quetta	295
Dera Ismail Khan to Ghuzni (*vid* Gomul Pass)	250
„ Kandahar	340
Herat to Bamian	390
„ Farrah	155
„ Girishk	314
„ Kabul (*vid* Daulatyar)	500
„ Kandahar	389
„ Quetta	533
„ Sibi	630
Kabul to Balkh	330
„ Bamian	110
„ Herat	500
„ Jellalabad	100
„ Kandahar	328
„ Peshawur	180
Kandahar to Dera Ismail Khan (Indus)	340
„ Herat	389
„ Kabul	328
„ Quetta	144
Kerki to Karshi	80
„ Kilif	100
„ Tcharjui	140

	Miles
Khiva to Askabad	280
„ Fort Alexandrovsk (Caspian)	676
„ Fort Perovski (Syr Daria)	396
„ Jizak	472
„ Kazalinsk (Syr Daria)	330
„ Kindarli Bay (Caspian)	543
„ Kizil Arvat	315
„ Krasnovodsk (by Sary Kamish Lakes)	533
„ Merv	350
„ Orenburg (by steppe)	866
„ „ (*viâ* Kazalinsk)	996
Kizil Arvat to Askabad	136
„ Geok Tepe	108
„ Tchikishliar	220
Kohat to Kabul (*viâ* Kurum Valley)	212
Krasnovodsk to Fort Alexandrovsk	412
„ Khiva	533
„ Tchikishliar	249
Kuhsan to Herat	65
„ Sarakhs	147
Kungrad to Mertvi Kultuk Bay (Caspian)	299
Kurrachi to Chaman	690
Maimena to Andkui	80
„ Bala Murghab	100
Merv to Herat	273
„ Khiva	350
„ Penjdeh	133
„ Sarakhs	94
„ Tcharjui	155
Meshed to Askabad	168
„ Herat	230
„ Kuchan	98
„ Pul-i-Khatun	90
„ Sarakhs	100
Mohammerah (Karun River) to Ahwaz	82
„ „ Dizful	172
„ „ Ispahan	411
„ „ Shustar	136
„ „ Teheran	621
Orenburg to Bokhara (by steppe)	1146
„ „ (*viâ* Tashkent and Samarkand)	1628
„ Khiva (by steppe)	866

	Miles
Orenburg to Khiva (*viâ* Kazalinsk)	996
„ Kazalinsk (Syr Daria)	667
„ Samarkand	1478
„ Tashkent	1291
Penjdeh to Bala Murghab	46
„ Herat	140
„ Maruchak	28
„ Merv	133
Quetta to Dera Ghazi Khan (Indus) (*viâ* Hurnai)	260
„ „ „ (*viâ* Pishin)	295
„ Herat	533
„ Kandahar	144
„ Sibi	100
Resht to Teheran	210
Samarkand to Balkh	300
„ Bokhara	150
„ Kabul	630
„ Karshi	113
„ Tashkent	190
Sarakhs to Kuhsan	147
„ Herat	170
„ Pul-i-Khatun	40
Tashkent to Khojent	95
„ Khokand	177
„ Orenburg	1291
„ Samarkand	190
Tcharjui to Bokhara	80
„ Kerki	140
„ Khiva (by Oxus)	260
Teheran to Astrabad	240
„ Bushire	780
„ Ispahan	280
„ Meshed	550
„ Shiraz	600
Uzun Ada to Askabad	300
„ Kizil Arvat	162
„ Merv	513
„ Oxus	665
„ Samarkand	895

APPENDIX III

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS IN CENTRAL ASIA, 1800–1889

I HAVE compiled the following chronology, not without considerable research, from a wide variety of sources. So far as I know, there is only one other chronological table in existence relating to the same question, viz. that at the end of the first volume of Dr. Lansdell's 'Russian Central Asia.' Dr. Lansdell's list, however, being restricted to the record of Russian advance in Central Asia, contains no dates of Afghan or Persian history, nor any mention of the dealings of England and Russia with either of those countries. Neither in its own department is it perfect, being sometimes diffuse in recording facts of no moment, while it elsewhere omits relatively important incidents. My own compilation is no doubt susceptible of vast improvement, but, within its limits, aspires to be a fairly adequate record of English and Russian movements in the regions described in the foregoing volume as Central Asia; dates connected with outlying countries or history being only introduced here and there, where they are correlative to the main chain of events. The subjoined list is brought up to the autumn of the present year, or a period five years later than Dr. Lansdell's catalogue.

First British mission (of Captain Malcolm), and treaty with Persia	1800
Proposed invasion of India by the Emperors Paul and Napoleon	1800
The Turkomans of Mangishlak appeal to be made Russian subjects, but subsequently revolt	1800
War between Russia and Persia	1802–6
Accession of Mohammed Rahim Khan of Khiva	1806
Scheme of Indian invasion by the Emperors Alexander and Napoleon	1807
First treaty between France and Persia	1807
Second and abortive mission of Malcolm to Persia	1808

Second treaty between Great Britain and Persia . .	March 1809
Russian administration introduced into the Kirghiz steppes .	1812
Treaty of Gulistan between Russia and Persia (by which Russia gained Imeritia, Mingrelia, Daghestan, Karabagh, Derbent, Baku, Shirvan, and Ganjeh) .	Oct. 1813
Treaty of Teheran between Great Britain and Persia .	Nov. 1814
Mission of Ponomareff to the Turkomans	1819
Visit of Mouravieff to Khiva	1819
Mission of M. de Negri to Bokhara	1821
Surveys of the East Caspian by Mouravieff	1821
First Russian caravan to Bokhara	1824
Moorcroft and Trebeck visit Bokhara, and die on their return through Afghan Turkestan	1825
Accession of Nasrullah, Amir of Bokhara	1826
„ Allah Kuli Khan of Khiva	1826
„ Dost Mohammed, Amir of Afghanistan . .	1826
Mission of Menzikoff to Teheran	1826
War renewed between Russia and Persia . . .	1826–8
Erivan captured by Paskievitch	Oct. 1827
Treaty of Turkomanchai between Russia and Persia (by which Russia gained Erivan and Nakhchivan) .	Feb. 1828
Treaty of Adrianople between Russia and Turkey (by which Russia gained Poti, etc.)	1829
Captain A. Conolly's overland journey to India . . ,	1829
Tekke Turkomans appear in the Merv country . .	*circ.* 1830
Dr. Wolff's first journey to Merv and Bokhara . . .	1831
Lieutenant A. Burnes' journey to Kabul, Bokhara, Merv, and Meshed	1832
Unsuccessful Persian expedition against Herat . . .	1833
Death of Futteh Ali and accession of Mohammed Shah in Persia	1834
Fort Novo-Alexandrovsk established by Perovski on eastern shore of the Caspian	1834
Russian mission of Demaison to Bokhara	1834
„ Vitkievitch „	1835
Trading expeditions of Karelin and Blaramberg to the Turkomans	1836
Persia, instigated by Russia, marches against Herat . .	1837
Siege of Herat and defence by Eldred Pottinger	Nov. 1837 to June 1838
Mission of Burnes to Kabul	Sept. 1837
Russian agent Vitkievitch at Kabul	Dec. 1837

Stoddart sent as British envoy from Teheran to Bokhara . 1838
Wood explores the Upper Oxus to Lake Sir-i-kul . . . 1838
British occupation of Karrack 1838
Treaty between England and Shah Suja . . . June 1838
Beginning of first Afghan war . . . . . Nov. 1838
Unsuccessful expedition of Perovski against Khiva . . 1839
Capture of Kandahar . . . . . April 1839
Capture of Kabul, flight of Dost Mohammed, and restoration of Shah Suja . . . . . Aug. 1839
First British expedition into Kelat . . . . . Nov. 1839
Rising of Dost Mohammed . . . . . Sept. 1840
Defeat and surrender of Dost Mohammed . . . Nov. 1840
Mission of Abbott, Shakespear, and Conolly to Khiva . . 1840
Mission of Bouteneff, Khanikoff, and Lehmann to Bokhara . 1841
Mission of Conolly to Khokand 1841
First treaty between Great Britain and Kelat . . . 1841
Treaty between Great Britain and Persia 1841
Naval station of Ashurada occupied by Russia . . . 1841
Assassination of Sir A. Burnes at Kabul . . . Nov. 1841
Murder of Sir W. Macnaghten at Kabul . . . Dec. 1841
Siege of British forces in Kabul . . Dec. 1841 to Jan. 1842
Retreat and massacre of British army . . . . Jan. 1842
Arrival of Lord Ellenborough in India . . . Feb. 1842
Advance of British relief column under Gen. Pollock . April 1842
Execution of Stoddart and Conolly at Bokhara . . June 1842
March of Gen. Nott from Kandahar to Kabul Aug. to Sept. 1842
General Pollock re-enters Kabul . . . . . Sept. 1842
Evacuation of Afghanistan . . . . . Oct. 1842
Dost Mohammed restored to throne 1842
First treaty (concluded by Danilevski) between Russia and Khiva 1842
Second journey of Dr. Wolff to Bokhara 1843
Visit of Taylour-Thomson to Merv and Khiva . . . 1843
Anglo-Russian agreement between the Emperor Nicholas and Lord Aberdeen 1844
Accession of Khudayar Khan of Khokand 1844
Submission of Great Horde of Kirghiz 1844
Abandonment of Fort Novo-Alexandrovsk in favour of Fort Novo-Petrovsk (afterwards in 1857 christened Fort Alexandrovsk) 1846
Treaty of Erzeroum between Turkey and Persia . . . 1847
First Russian fort built at Aralsk, on the Aral Sea . . 1848

Commencement of the Aral flotilla	1848
Accession of Nasr-ed-din, Shah of Persia	Sept. 1848
Fort No. 1, or Kazala, built on the Syr Daria	1849
Convention between Great Britain and Persia	1851
Reconnaissance by Blaramberg against Ak Musjid	1852
Ak Musjid, on Syr Daria, captured by the Russians and made Fort Perovski	1853
Anglo-Persian convention concerning Herat	1853
The Russians establish a military station at Fort Verny	1854
Second treaty between Great Britain and Kelat	1854
First treaty between Great Britain and Dost Mohammed	March 1855
Surrender of Herat to the Persians	Oct. 1856
Second treaty between Great Britain and Dost Mohammed	Jan. 1857
War between Great Britain and Persia	Nov. 1856 to March 1857
Treaty of Paris between Great Britain and Persia	March 1857
Accession of Khudadad Khan of Kelat	1857
Tekke Turkomans expel Sariks and occupy Merv	1857
Indian Mutiny	1857–8
Mission of Ignatieff to Khiva and Bokhara	1858
Russian mission of Khanikoff to Herat	1858
Expedition of Dandevil against the Turkomans	1859
Government of India transferred from the East India Company to the Crown	1859
Accession of Mozaffur-ed-din, Amir of Bokhara	1860
Treaty of Pekin between Russia and China	1860
The Russians recommence military operations in Central Asia	1860
Persian expedition against Merv repulsed by the Tekkes	1861
Death of Dost Mohammed	June 1863
Voyage of A. Vambéry to Khiva, Bokhara, and Samarkand	1863
Overland telegraphic convention between England, Turkey, and Persia	1863
Capture of Aulieata and Hazret by the Russians	July 1864
Storming of Tchimkent by Tchernaieff	Oct. 1864
Circular of Prince Gortchakoff	Nov. 1864
Accession of Seid Mohammed Rahim Khan of Khiva	1865
Formation of Turkestan province	Feb. 1865
Storming of Tashkent by Tchernaieff	June 1865
Yakub Beg captures Kashgar	1865
Tchernaieff replaced by Romanovski	1866

Defeat of Bokharan army at Irjar	May 1866
Capture of Khojent (May), Ura Tepe, and Jizak	Oct. 1866
Yakub Beg captures Yarkand	1866
Formation of Government of Turkestan under Kaufmann	Sept. 1867
Capture of Samarkand	May 1868
Final defeat of Bokharan army	June 1868
Annexation of Zerafshan province by Russia	Nov. 1868
First treaty between Russia and Bokhara	1868
Civil war in Afghanistan	1863–8
Final triumph of Shir Ali Khan	Jan. 1869
Flight of Abdurrahman Khan to Samarkand	1869
Umballa Conference between Lord Mayo and Shir Ali	March 1869
First overtures from Lord Clarendon to Prince Gortchakoff about Afghanistan	1869
Occupation of Krasnovodsk, on the east shore of the Caspian, by Stolietoff	Nov. 1869
Karshi and Shahri Sebz restored by Russia to Bokhara	1870
Occupation of Michaelovsk and Molla Kari by the Russians	1870
First expedition against the Turkomans to Kizil Arvat	1870
Occupation of Kulja by the Russians	July 1871
Reconnaissances of Markozoff to Sary Kamish Lakes and on the Atrek	1871
Russian fort erected at Tchikishliar	1871
Second Russian reconnaissance to Kizil Arvat and Bahmi	1872
Gortchakoff-Granville Agreement as to boundaries of Afghanistan	Oct. 1872
Captain Marsh's ride through Khorasan	1872
Seistan Boundary Commission	1872
Persian Railway Concession to Baron de Reuter	1872
Russian treaty with Yakub Beg and recognition of independence of Kashgar	1872
Russian expedition against Khiva	1873
Capture of Khiva	May 1873
Annexation of Amu-Daria province by Russia	Aug. 1873
Treaty between Russia and Khiva	„ 1873
Fortress of Koushid Khan Kala begun by the Merv Tekkes	1873
Second treaty between Russia and Bokhara	Oct. 1873
First visit of the Shah to Europe, April to September	1873
Journey of Colonel Valentine Baker in Turkomania and Khorasan	1873
Formation of military district of Transcaspia *sub* General Lomakin	April 1874

Journey of Col. Ch. MacGregor in Khorasan . . . 1875
Capt. Burnaby's ride to Khiva 1875
Rebellion in Khokand 1875
Nur Verdi elected Khan of Akhal 1875
Annexation of Khokand and formation of Russian province of Ferghana . . . . . Feb. 1876
Expedition of Prjevalski to Lob Nor 1876
Treaty of Jacobabad between Great Britain and Kelat. Dec. 1876
Third Russian expedition to, and retreat from, Kizil Arvat . 1877
Defeat and death of Yakub Beg 1877
Abortive conference at Peshawur between Sir L. Pelly and Nur Mahomet Shah . . . . . Feb. 1877
Death of Koushid Khan of Merv, and election of Nur Verdi Khan of Akhal 1878
Kaufmann threatens invasion of Afghanistan and India June 1878
Pamir column despatched under General Abramoff . „ 1878
Arrival of Stolietoff mission at Kabul . . . . . July 1878
Russian fort built at Chat, on the Atrek . . . Aug. 1878
Second visit of the Shah to Europe 1878
British envoy turned back from Khyber Pass . . Sept. 1878
Colonel Grodekoff's ride from Samarkand to Herat . . . Oct. to Nov. 1878
Second Afghan war begun . . . . . Nov. 1878
Flight of Shir Ali . . . . . Dec. 1878
Death of Shir Ali and accession of Yakub Khan . . Feb. 1879
Treaty of Gundamuk with Yakub Khan . . . May 1879
Assassination of Sir L. Cavagnari at Kabul . . . Sept. 1879
Third Afghan war begun . . . . . „ 1879
Defeat of Lomakin by the Turkomans . . . . „ 1879
Reoccupation of Kabul. . . . . Oct. 1879
Yakub Khan deported to India . . . . . Dec. 1879
Skobeleff appointed Commander-in-Chief in Transcaspia Mar. 1880
Death of Nur Verdi Khan of Akhal and Merv, and election of Makdum Kuli Khan . . . . . May 1880
Skobeleff lands at Krasnovodsk . . . . . „ 1880
Bahmi occupied . . . . . June 1880
Recognition of Abdurrahman Khan as Amir . . July 1880
Disaster of Maiwand . . . . . „ 1880
March of Sir F. Roberts from Kabul to Kandahar. Aug. 8–31, 1880
Battle of Kandahar . . . . . Sept. 1, 1880
First reconnaissance of Geok Tepe . . . . July 1880
Commencement of the Transcaspian Railway . . . 1880

Colonel Stewart on the Turkoman frontier	1880
Storming of Geok Tepe by Skobeleff	Jan. 1881
Occupation of Askabad	„ 1881
O'Donovan at Merv	Mar. to July 1881
Evacuation of Kandahar	April 1881
Formation of Transcaspian Province *sub* General Rohrberg	May 1881
Annexation of Akhal-Tekke oasis	„ 1881
Transcaspian Railway opened to Kizil Arvat	Dec. 1881
Frontier convention between Russia and Persia	„ 1881
Visit of Alikhanoff in disguise to Merv	Feb. 1882
Surveys of Lessar	1882–1883
Retrocession of Ili province and Kulja to China	1882
Quetta District handed over on a rent to the British	1882
Formation of the Government of the Steppe	1882
Tchernaieff appointed Governor-General of Turkestan	1882
Completion of Transcaucasian Railway, Tiflis to Baku	1882
„ „ „ Tiflis to Batoum	1883
Occupation by Russia of Tejend oasis	Oct. 1883
Quetta District ceded to Great Britain	1883
Shignan and Roshan occupied by Abdurrahman Khan	1883
Komaroff appointed Governor-General of Transcaspia	1883
Annexation of Merv	Feb. 1884
Occupation of Sarakhs	April 1884
Frontier negotiations between Great Britain and Russia	1884
Recommencement of Quetta Railway	1884
Recall of Tchernaieff and appointment of Rosenbach	1884
Sir P. Lumsden sent as British Boundary Commissioner.	Oct. 1884
The Russians occupy Pul-i-Khatun	„ 1884
The Russians occupy Zulfikar and Akrobat, and advance upon Penjdeh	Feb. 1885
Fight between the Russians and Afghans at Tash-Kepri, on the Kushk	Mar. 30, 1885
Rawul Pindi conference between Lord Dufferin and Abdurrahman Khan	April 1885
War scare in Great Britain	„ 1885
Sir P. Lumsden recalled	May 1885
Transcaspian Railway resumed	June 1885
Accession of Seid Abdul Ahad, Amir of Bokhara	Nov. 1885
British and Russian Boundary Commissioners meet again	„ 1885
Annexation of Batoum	1886
Bolan Railway constructed to Quetta	1886

Demarcation of Afghan boundary up to separation of Commission . . . . . Sept. 1886
Return of British Commission through Kabul to India. Oct. 1886
Occupation of Kerki by Russia . . . . . May 1887
Negotiations at St. Petersburg continued and concluded July 1887
Final settlement and demarcation of Afghan frontier Winter 1887
Surrender of Ayub Khan to the British, and detention in India. 1887
Quetta Railway continued to Kila Abdulla . . . Jan. 1888
Tunnel commenced through the Amran Mountains . . 1888
Transcaspian Railway reaches Samarkand . . . May 1888
Revolt of Is-hak Khan against Abdurrahman Khan July to Sept. 1888
Retreat of Is-hak Khan to Samarkand. 1888
Karun River concession by Persia to England . . Oct. 1888
Concession to Baron de Reuter for Imperial Bank of Persia Jan. 1889
War scare on the Oxus boundary . . Feb. to Mar. 1889
Convention between Russia and Persia . . . Mar. 1889
Third visit of the Shah to Europe . . . May to Oct. 1889

APPENDIX IV

DIRECTIONS TO TRAVELLERS IN TRANSCASPIA

In Chapter I. I have indicated the various direct routes to the Caucasus and the Caspian. A train leaves Batoum every morning and Tiflis every night for Baku, which is reached the next afternoon. The steamers of the Caucasus and Mercury Company sail for Uzun Ada twice a week, returning also twice a week. The distance, duration, and cost of journey from Uzun Ada to Samarkand I have mentioned in Chapter II.

The most favourable seasons of the year for making a journey into Central Asia are the spring and autumn. In the summer the climate is inordinately hot. In the winter it is icy cold ; the railway may be blocked, and the harbours are frequently frozen.

Accommodation in Transcaspia and Turkestan is scanty and miserable. There are so-called hotels at Askabad, Merv, and Samarkand, but they would be called hotels nowhere else. Travellers must take with them sheets, pillows, blankets, towels, and baths. They will find none in the country. It is possible, however, to sleep in the railway carriages, and where feasible they should always be preferred.

Clothing must be taken adapted to both extremes of temperature ; for it is often very hot in the daytime and very cold at night. For an Englishman a pith helmet, similar to those worn in India, is a useful protection, but does not seem to be affected by the Russians. The latter wear the universal flat white cap, with cotton crown. It can be bought at Tiflis, Baku, or anywhere in Russian territory, and is the most serviceable and least conspicuous headpiece that can be worn, the more so as the calico covering is removable and can be washed. Riding-breeches and boots are useful for extended journeys or hard work in the interior ; and to those unaccustomed to Cossack or native saddles an English saddle is a necessity.

To Englishmen the language is a great stumbling-block. English is an extreme rarity in Transcaspia. French and German are not

spoken except by Russian officers of the higher class. The languages required are Russian for use with the Russians, and Persian or Tartar (Turki) for the natives. It is well worth while picking up a little Russian beforehand in order to make oneself understood by the former. With the natives an interpreter or dragoman is simply indispensable ; and a man should be engaged at Tiflis or elsewhere who can show testimonials of ability to speak the languages, and of travelling experience in the countries to be traversed.

The cost of travelling and living is absurdly cheap, and estimates framed on European standards may be halved.

There is a native copper and silver currency at Bokhara. Everywhere else, and at Bokhara also, the paper rouble is the staple medium of exchange. London bankers have no correspondents in Central Asia, but notes or letters of credit can be cashed at Tiflis, and Russian paper money is changeable everywhere.

Along the railway very respectable food can be procured at the buffets. The same applies to the large towns. For any excursion or deviation from the beaten track a prior supply is a *sine quâ non*, and no harm is done by laying in a stock of tinned meats, preserves, chocolate, &c. at Tiflis or Baku.

It is a cardinal rule to avoid the drinking water of the country. Passable wine from the Caucasus and Samarkand is procurable. So is Russian beer. Excellent tea is always ready in the *Samovars*, which are the *lares et penates* of the Russian in foreign lands, accompanying him wherever he goes, and which are equally patronised by the natives. Air-cushions are invaluable for a *tarantass* journey. Wax candles are often a great blessing. Familiar precautions must be taken against small but familiar pests.

It is useless to think of landing in Transcaspia without having procured an *oktriti list*, or special permit, authorised or signed by the Minister of War, which must be applied for at St. Petersburg. An ordinary passport must also be taken, as it is examined and registered by the local police in every Russian town. If the frontier is to be crossed into Persia, this should have been viséed beforehand at the Persian Embassy in London, or by a Persian Consul in some neighbouring place.

It is hopeless at present to attempt penetrating into Afghanistan. Witness the experience of Mr. Stevens, the bicyclist, and of the French travellers, MM. Pepin and Bonvalot. For postal journeys in Russian territory a *podorojna* must be procured from the postal station, and countersigned by the authorities. Payment is always required before starting, and covers the entire expense of

teams, provided at the several post-stations throughout the journey. The document must be produced at each station and handed to the postmaster. The vehicle is hired separately, or, if wanted for long distances, is frequently bought. A gratuity to the drivers is the only extra expense.

Transcaspia and Western Turkestan are not in themselves to be visited for purposes of sport, although they are on the high road to the sportsman's El Dorado, the Pamir, and the home of the Great Mountain Sheep.

Letters to and from Transcaspia are only precariously delivered, and are liable to be opened *in transitu*.

APPENDIX V

TREATY BETWEEN RUSSIA AND BOKHARA (1873)

CONCLUDED BETWEEN GENERAL AIDE-DE-CAMP KAUFMANN, GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF TURKESTAN, AND SEID MOZAFFUR, AMIR OF BOKHARA.

ART. I.—The frontier between the dominions of His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of All the Russias and His Highness the Amir of Bokhara remains unchanged.[1]

The Khivan territory on the right bank of the Amu Daria having been incorporated in the Russian Empire, the former frontier between Khiva and Bokhara, from the oasis of Khelata to Gugertli, is abolished. The territory between the former Bokharo-Khivan frontier on the right bank of the Amu Daria from Gugertli to Meschekli, and from Meschekli to the point of junction of the former Bokharo-Khivan frontier with the frontier of the Russian Empire, is incorporated in the dominions of the Amir of Bokhara.

ART. II.—The right bank of the Amu Daria being severed from the Khanate of Khiva, the caravan routes leading north from Bokhara into the Russian dominions traverse exclusively the territories of Bokhara and Russia. The Governments of Russia and Bokhara, each within its own territory, shall watch over the safety of these caravan routes and of the trade thereupon.

ART. III.—Russian steamers, and other Russian vessels, whether belonging to the Government or to private individuals, shall have the right of free navigation on that portion of the Amu Daria which belongs to the Amir of Bokhara.

ART. IV.—The Russians shall have the right to establish piers and warehouses in such places upon the Bokharan banks of the Amu Daria as may be judged necessary and convenient for that purpose. The Bokharan Government shall be responsible for the safety of

[1] *I.e.* since the Treaty of 1868.

these erections. The final and definite selection of localities shall rest with the supreme Russian authorities in Central Asia.

ART. V.—All the towns and villages of the Khanate of Bokhara shall be open to Russian trade. Russian traders and caravans shall have free passage throughout the Khanate, and shall enjoy the special protection of the local authorities. The Bokharan Government shall be responsible for the safety of Russian caravans on Bokharan territory.

ART. VI.—All merchandise belonging to Russian traders, whether imported from Russia to Bokhara, or exported from Bokhara to Russia, shall be subject to an *ad valorem* duty of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., in the same manner as an *ad valorem* duty of $\frac{1}{40}$ is charged in the Russian province of Turkestan. No other tax, duty or impost whatsoever shall be imposed thereupon.

ART. VII.—Russian traders shall have the right to transport their merchandise through Bokhara free of transit dues.

ART. VIII.—Russian traders shall have the right to establish caravanserais for the storage of merchandise in all Bokharan towns. The same right is accorded to Bokharan traders in the towns of the Russian province of Turkestan.

ART. IX.—Russian traders shall have the right to keep commercial agents in all the towns of Bokhara, in order to watch over the progress of trade and the levying of duties, and to enter into communications with the local authorities thereupon. The same right is accorded to Bokharan traders in the towns of the Russian province of Turkestan.

ART. X.—All commercial engagements between Russians and Bokharans shall be held sacred, and shall be faithfully carried out by both parties. The Bokharan Government shall undertake to keep watch over the honest fulfilment of all such engagements, and over the fair and honourable conduct of commercial affairs in general.

ART. XI.—Russian subjects shall have the right, in common with the subjects of Bokhara, to carry on all branches of industry and handicraft on Bokharan territory that are sanctioned by the law of Sharigat. Bokharan subjects shall have a similar right to practise all such occupations on Russian territory as are sanctioned by the law of Russia.

ART. XII.—Russian subjects shall have the right to acquire gardens, cultivate lands, and own every species of real property in the Khanate. Such property shall be subject to the same land-tax as

Bokharan property. The same right shall be enjoyed by Bokharan subjects in the whole territory of the Russian Empire.

ART. XIII.—Russian subjects shall have the right to enter Bokharan territory when furnished with permits, signed by the Russian authorities. They shall have the right of free passage throughout the Khanate, and shall enjoy the special protection of the Bokharan authorities.

ART. XIV.—The Bokharan Government shall not in any case admit on to Bokharan territory any foreigners, of whatever nationality, arriving from Russian territory, unless they be furnished with special permits signed by the Russian authorities. If a criminal, being a Russian subject, takes refuge on Bokharan territory, he shall be arrested by the Bokharan authorities and delivered over to the nearest Russian authorities.

ART. XV.—In order to maintain direct and uninterrupted relations with the supreme Russian authorities in Central Asia, the Amir of Bokhara shall appoint one of his intimate counsellors to be his resident envoy and plenipotentiary at Tashkent. Such envoy shall reside at Tashkent in a house belonging to the Amir and at the expense of the latter.

ART. XVI.—The Russian Government shall in like manner have the right to appoint a permanent representative at Bokhara, attached to the person of His Highness the Amir. He shall reside in a house belonging to the Russian Government and at the expense of the latter.

ART. XVII.—In conformity with the desire of the Emperor of All the Russias, and in order to enhance the glory of His Imperial Majesty, His Highness the Amir Seid Mozaffur has determined as follows:—The traffic in human beings, being contrary to the law which commands man to love his neighbour, is abolished for ever in the territory of Bokhara. In accordance with this resolve, the strictest injunctions shall immediately be given by the Amir to all his Begs to enforce the new law, and special orders shall be sent to all the frontier towns of Bokhara to which slaves are brought for sale from neighbouring countries, that should any such slaves be brought thither, they shall be taken from their owners and shall be set at liberty without loss of time.

ART. XVIII.—His Highness the Amir Seid Mozaffur, being sincerely desirous of strengthening and developing the amicable relations which have subsisted for five years to the benefit of Bokhara, approves and accepts for his guidance the above seventeen articles

composing a treaty of friendship between Russia and Bokhara. This treaty shall consist of two copies, each copy being written in the two languages, in the Russian and in the Turki language.

In token of the confirmation of this treaty and of its acceptance for the guidance of himself and of his successors, the Amir Seid Mozaffur has affixed thereto his seal. Done at Shaar on the 10th day of October, 1873, being the 19th day of the month Shayban, of the year 1290.

APPENDIX VI

TREATY BETWEEN RUSSIA AND PERSIA (relating to Akhal-Khorasan Boundary), 1881

IN the name of God the Almighty. His Majesty the Emperor and Autocrat of All the Russias, and His Majesty the Shah of Persia, acknowledging the necessity of accurately defining the frontier of their possessions east of the Caspian Sea, and of establishing therein security and tranquillity, have agreed to conclude a Convention for that purpose, and have appointed as their Plenipotentiaries :

His Majesty the Emperor and Autocrat of All the Russias, on the one hand, Ivan Zinovieff, his Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary at the Court of His Majesty the Shah ;

His Majesty the Shah of Persia, on the other, Mirza Seid Khan, Mutemid-ul-Mulk, his Minister for Foreign Affairs ;

Who, having exchanged their respective full powers, found in good and due form, have agreed on the following Articles :

ART. I.—The frontier-line between the possessions of the Russian Empire and Persia, east of the Caspian Sea, is fixed as follows :

Beginning at the Hassan Kuli Gulf, the course of the River Atrek serves as the frontier as far as Chat. From Chat the frontier-line follows in a north-easterly direction the ridges of the Songu Dagh and Sagirim ranges, thence extending northward to the Chandir River, reaching the bed of that river at Tchakan Kala. From Tchakan Kala it runs in a northerly direction to the ridge of the mountains dividing the Chandir and Sumbar valleys, and extends along the ridge of these mountains in an easterly direction, descending to the bed of the Sumbar at the spot where the Akh-Agaian stream falls into it. From this point eastward the bed of the Sumbar marks the frontier as far as the ruins of Medjet Daine. Thence the road to Durun forms the frontier-line as far as the ridge of the Kopet Dagh, along the ridge of which the frontier extends south-eastward, but before reaching the upper part of the Germab Pass, turns to the south along the mountain heights dividing the

valley of the Sumbar from the source of the Germab. Thence taking a south-easterly direction across the summits of the Misino and Tchubest mountains, it reaches the road from Germab to Rabat, passing at a distance of one verst to the north of the latter spot. From this point the frontier-line runs along the ridge of the mountains as far as the summit of the Dalang mountain, whence, passing on the northern side of the village of Khairabad, it extends in a north-easterly direction as far as the boundaries of Geok Keital. From the boundaries of Geok Keital the frontier-line crosses to the gorge of the River Firuze, intersecting that gorge on the northern side of the village of Firuze. Thence the frontier-line takes a south-easterly direction to the summits of the mountain range, bounding on the south the valley through which the road from Askabad to Firuze passes, and runs along the crest of these mountains to the most easterly point of the range. From here the frontier-line crosses over to the northernmost summit of the Aselm range, passing along its ridge in a south-easterly direction, and then skirting round to the north of the village of Keltechinar, it runs to the point where the Zir-i-Koh and Kizil Dagh mountains join, extending thence south-eastward along the summits of the Zir-i-Koh range until it issues into the valley of the Baba Durmaz stream. It then takes a northerly direction, and reaches the oasis at the road from Gyaurs to Lutfabad, leaving the fortress of Baba Durmaz to the east.

ART. II.—Whereas, in Article I. of the present Convention, the principal points are indicated through which the frontier between the possessions of Russia and Persia is to pass, the High Contracting Parties are to appoint Special Commissioners, with a view of accurately tracing on the spot the frontier-line, and of erecting proper boundary-marks. The date and place of meeting of the said Commissioners shall be mutually agreed upon by the High Contracting Parties.

ART. III.—Whereas the forts of Germab and Kulkulab, situated in the gorge through which the stream watering the soil of the Transcaspian province passes, lie to the north of the line which, in virtue of Article I. of the present Convention, is to serve as the boundary between the territories of the two High Contracting Parties, the Government of His Majesty the Shah engages to evacuate the said forts within the space of one year from the date of the exchange of the ratifications of the present Convention, but shall have the right during the said period to remove the inhabitants of Germab and Kulkulab to within the Persian frontier, and to establish them there. On its part, the Government of the Emperor of All the Russias

engages not to erect fortifications in these said localities nor to establish any Turkoman families therein.

ART. IV.—Whereas, the sources of the River Firuze, as well as of other streams watering the soil of the Transcaspian province contiguous to the Persian frontier lie within the Persian territory, the Government of His Majesty the Shah engages on no account whatever to permit the establishment of fresh settlements along the course of the said streams and rivulets from their sources to the point where they leave Persian territory, and not to extend the area of land at present under cultivation, and under no pretence whatever to turn off the water in larger quantities than is necessary for irrigating the fields now under cultivation within the Persian territory. With a view to the immediate observance and fulfilment of this stipulation the Government of His Majesty the Shah engages to appoint a sufficient number of competent agents, and to subject any infringer thereof to severe punishment.

ART. V.—With a view to the development of commercial intercourse between the Transcaspian province and Khorasan, both High Contracting Parties engage to come to a mutually advantageous agreement as soon as possible for the construction of wagon-roads suitable for commercial traffic between the above-mentioned provinces.

ART. VI.—The Government of His Majesty the Shah of Persia engages to strictly prohibit the export from His Majesty's dominions along the whole extent of the frontier of the provinces of Astrabad and Khorasan, of all arms and war material, and likewise to adopt measures to prevent arms being supplied to the Turkomans residing in Persian territory. The Persian frontier authorities shall afford the most effective support to the agents of the Imperial Russian Government, whose duty it shall be to watch that arms are not exported from the Persian territory. The Government of His Majesty the Emperor of All the Russias, on its part, engages to prevent arms and war material being supplied from Russian territory to Turkomans living in Persia.

ART. VII.—With a view to the observance and fulfilment of the stipulations of the present Convention, and in order to regulate the proceedings of the Turkomans residing on the Persian frontier, the Government of His Majesty the Emperor of All the Russias shall have the right to nominate agents to the frontier points of Persia. In all questions concerning the observance of order and tranquillity in the districts contiguous to the possessions of the High Contracting Parties, the appointed agents will act as intermediaries in the relations between the Russian and Persian authorities.

ART. VIII.—All engagements and stipulations contained in Treaties and Conventions concluded up to this time between the two High Contracting Parties shall remain in force.

ART. IX.—The present Convention, done in duplicate, and signed by the Plenipotentiaries of both parties, who have affixed to it the seal of their arms, shall be confirmed and ratified by His Majesty the Emperor and Autocrat of All the Russias and His Majesty the Shah of Persia; the ratifications to be exchanged between the Plenipotentiaries of both parties at Teheran within the space of four months, or earlier, if possible.

Done at Teheran the 21st December, 1881, which corresponds to the Mussulman date of the 29th Mucharem, 1299.

X marked [illegible] library.

APPENDIX VII

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF CENTRAL ASIA

I. Central Asia in General.
   1. Selection from early travels.
   2. General information.
   3. Bokhara.
   4. Khiva.
   5. Turkestan.
   6. Turkomania and the Turkomans.

II. The Transcaspian Railway.

III. Afghanistan.
   1. General information.
   2. Anglo-Afghan wars.
      The first Afghan war, 1838–1842.
      The second Afghan war, 1878–1880.
   3. The Afghan Frontier Question.
   4. Beluchistan.
   5. Euphrates Valley Railway.

IV. Persia.

The following Bibliography, though it contains a great number of titles that have not hitherto been collected, and covers a surface distinct from any previous publication, makes no claim to be considered exhaustive. It might without trouble and with the aid of the excellent bibliographies that have been published by Russian authorities, have been extended to tenfold its present dimensions. A mere selection from Mejoff's copious volumes[1] would alone have sufficed for this object. I have purposely limited it, however, in obedience to the following considerations. My desire has been to name :

1. The chief books relating to the subject-matter of this volume,

[1] *Recueil du Turkestan, comprenant des livres et des articles sur l'Asie Centrale*, composé par V. J. Mejoff. 3 vols., St. Petersburg, 1878, 1884, 1888.

i.e. Russian and British Central Asia, that have appeared during the not too remote past, and principally since the beginning of this century, omitting such writings as have either become wholly obsolete or have ceased to merit attention.

2. The books most easily accessible to English readers, and for the most part written in, or translated into, the English language. I have accordingly only mentioned the principal Russian, German, and French works. In the case of Russian publications, assuming a general unfamiliarity with the Russian alphabet, I have either reproduced the titles in English characters and appended a translation of their meaning, or have given the latter alone.

3. The more recent books dealing with the latest phases of the Central Asian question, such as the Russo-Afghan frontier question and the Persian question.

4. Such writings, irrespective of their merit or claim to live, as have hitherto been published outside Russia, upon a Central Asian or upon the Transcaspian Railway. This literature is only of ephemeral interest, but for the purposes of my book it has a certain importance, because the interest is that of to-day.

The classification under four main headings—I. Central Asia in general. II. The Transcaspian Railway. III. Afghanistan, and IV. Persia—does not pretend to be a mutually exclusive one. Some books, notably those of extended travel or political criticism, might justly claim to be ranked under two, if not three, of the headings. Such works have been placed in the category to which they seemed most distinctively attached. The general principle of classification has been adopted, because the four subjects named are those most likely to appeal to the student as the objects of independent investigation. In the case of Central Asia and Afghanistan, geographical, historical, or political lines of cleavage have suggested a natural subdivision into minor headings. The books are arranged throughout in chronological order, the date of the subject-matter (in the case of history) being accepted as the criterion in preference to that of publication.

Restricting my range of vision in this bibliography, as in the book to which it forms an appendix, to those parts of Central Asia in which Great Britain and Russia have a common interest, and whose history and fortunes are bound up with the policy of the two empires, I have included no special references to Russian advance or power in Siberia, Mongolia, Chinese Turkestan, or Thibet. The bibliography, like the volume, may be defined as referring to the regions between the Caspian on the west and Khokand on the east, and from the

Indian frontier and the Persian Gulf on the south to the Syr Daria and the Aral Sea on the north. Scientific works, *i.e.* works relating to the physical features, climate, ethnography, flora, fauna, and products of Central Asia, I have, as a general rule, excluded, as unsuited to this work. Neither have I incorporated references to the proceedings of scientific societies, nor articles from magazines, periodical publications, and journals; although much useful literature, only to be disinterred after prodigious labour, lies embedded in these uninspiring surroundings.

Dr. Lansdell, at the close of his second volume, prints a bibliography, differently classified, and compiled with immense assiduity, but upon less eclectic principles. A student is more likely to be bewildered than relieved by the spectacle of 700 titles, covering 22 pages of very small print, and relating to Russian Central Asia alone. His bibliography, further, like his chronology, omits all reference to Persia, Afghanistan, and the Frontier Question, and ceases in 1884, My bibliography of the three last-named subjects is, so far as I know the first that has appeared.

In the compilation of the following catalogue valuable assistance has been most amiably lent to me by Mr. G. K. Fortescue, Assistant Librarian of the British Museum.

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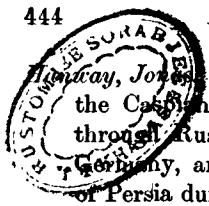

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Spottiswoode & Co. Printers, New-street Square, London.

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